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STRAIN 3

THE STORY THUS FAR...

His family megacorporation, KUSAKA, plans an Asian oil deal that might change the world. Chairman Shunichiro fears nothing but his own "strain," his rival heirs—half-brother Shingo, whom he regards as an aberrant bad seed, and his own daughter, Shion, the product of an old affair. Shunichiro's schemes left them both good as dead in the slums of Malaysia: Shingo, a five-dollar hit-man known as *Mayo*—"The Horse"; Shion, a would-be teen prostitute. Their allies are few: minor gangster, old Sai, and madam Kyoko. After the sadomasochistic cop Angel is hired by KUSAKA to finish Shingo and Shion, only to end up in a wheelchair, Shunichiro sends in the man who used to be *Kyoko*'s pimp, yakuza Murota. With family at the root of all this bloodshed, will Murota hesitate when Kyoko reveals she bore him a secret daughter?

STRAIN

STORY BY BURONSON, ART BY RYOICHI IKEGAMI

PULP GRAPHIC NOVEL

vol. 3

STORY BY
BURONSON
ART BY
RYOICHI IKEGAMI

ENGLISH ADAPTATION BY
YUJI ONIKI

This volume contains the STRAIN installments from PULP Vol. 3, No. 4 through Vol. 3 No. 11 in their entirety

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PULP GRAPHIC NOVELS TO DATE

BANANA FISH VOL. 1
BANANA FISH VOL. 2
BANANA FISH VOL. 3

BLACK & WHITE VOL. 1
BLACK & WHITE VOL. 2

DANCE TILL TOMORROW VOL. 1
DANCE TILL TOMORROW VOL. 2

HEARTBROKEN ANGELS VOL. 1

STRAIN VOL. 1
STRAIN VOL. 2
STRAIN VOL. 3

VOYEUR
VOYEURS INC. VOL. 1

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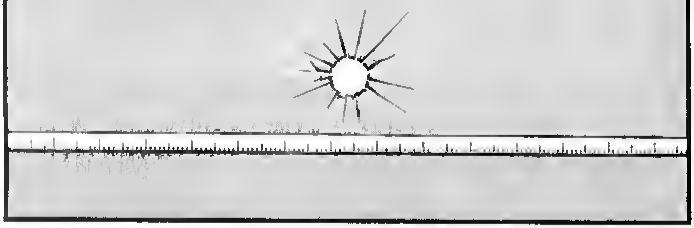
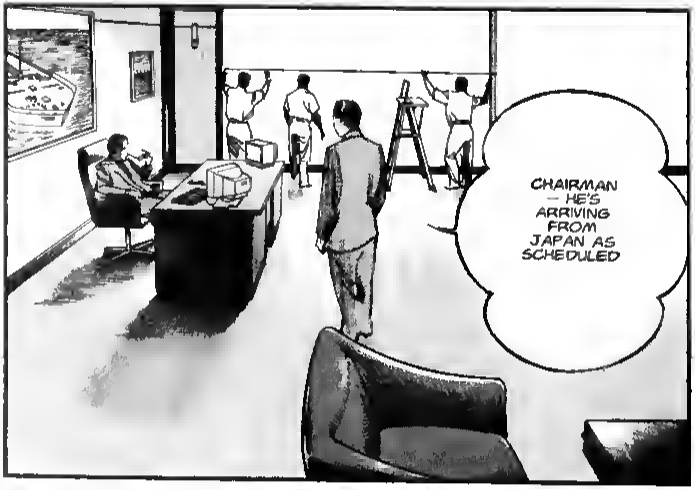
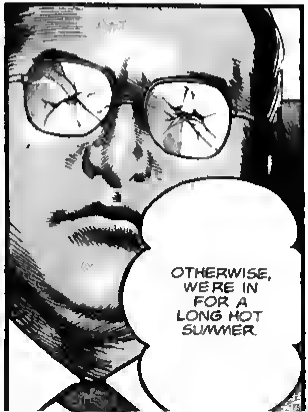
CHAPTER ONE
ABSOLUTE POWER

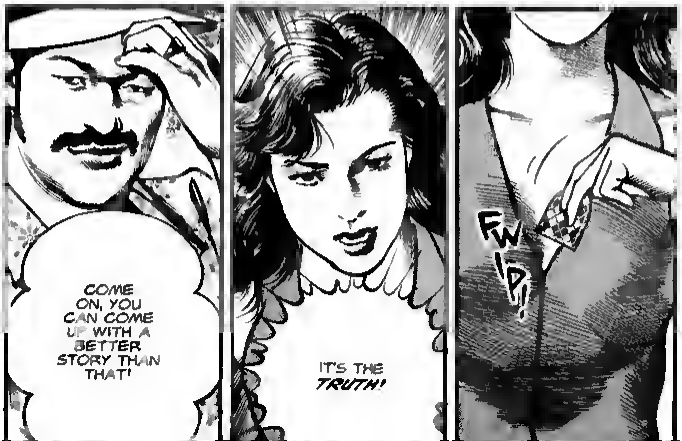



CHAIRMAN — HE'S ARRIVING FROM JAPAN AS SCHEDULED

HOPEFULLY THOSE TWO WILL BE TERMINATED BY THEN...


OTHERWISE, WE'RE IN FOR A LONG HOT SUMMER.

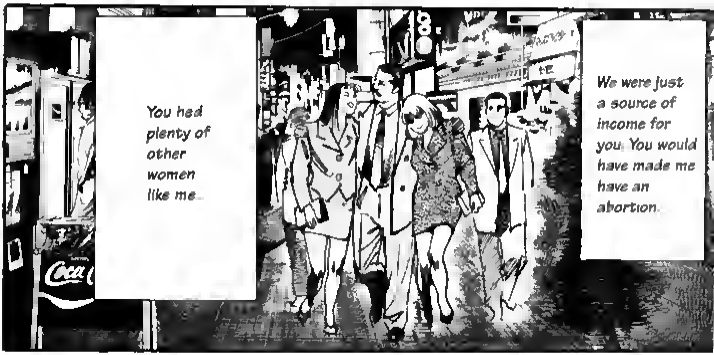
Y-YOU'RE LYIN


COME ON, YOU CAN COME UP WITH A BETTER STORY THAN THAT!
IT'S THE TRUTH!
FWIP!

HERE — SEE FOR YOUR-SELF!
TH-THIS IS...!?
NODD

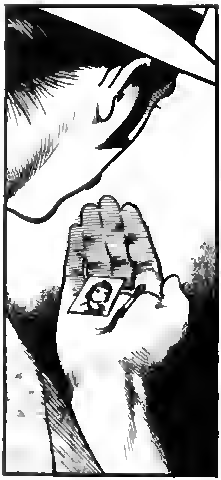
Twelve years ago
GYNECOLOGIC CLINIC

I couldn't tell you.


You had plenty of other women like me...
We were just a source of income for you. You would have made me have an abortion.

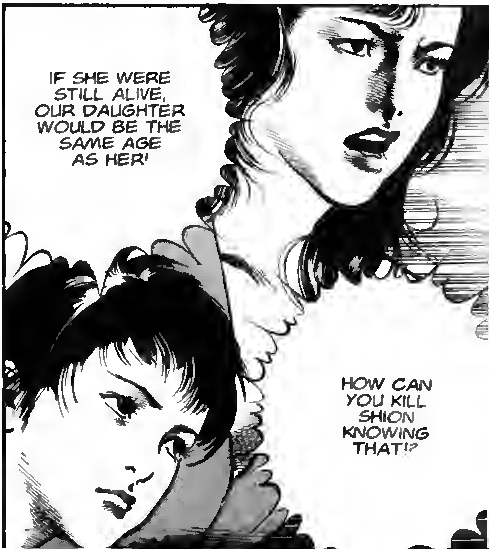
BESIDES, I DIDN'T WANT HER TO GROW UP WITH A GANGSTER FOR A FATHER.
THAT'S WHY I DIS APPEARED
...

I'M GLAD I HAD MY CHILD. I WAS SO HAPPY AFTER SHE WAS BORN.
BUT WHEN SHE TURNED THREE, THE DOCTORS DISCOVERED A MALIGNANT BRAIN TUMOR
KAKKA
KAKKA
KAKKA
SO SHE'S... DEAD?



I COULDN'T BEAR BEING IN JAPAN ANYMORE I MOVED TO MALAYSIA.
...SO I WOULDN'T BE HAUNTED BY MY MEMORIES. I GREW HARD HERE

I ONLY GOT INVOLVED IN THIS AFFAIR FOR THE MONEY
BUT THEN SHION CHANGED ME


IF SHE WERE STILL ALIVE, OUR DAUGHTER WOULD BE THE SAME AGE AS HER!
HOW CAN YOU KILL SHION KNOWING THAT!?

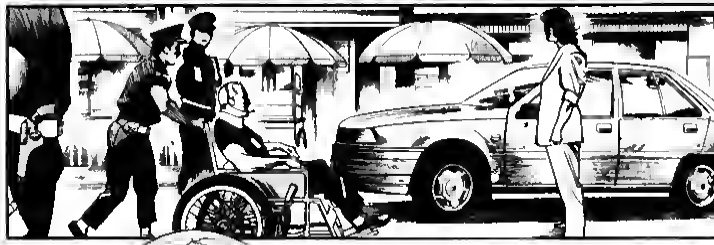
HEH HEH
HEH
EVEN IF ALL OF THAT'S TRUE...
CLNCH
SHION AIN'T MINE!
H HOW CAN YOU—?

SHA
CH
BLAMMM
SPLAK
S-
STOP!

CHAK
MAYO! I GOT IT!
I FOUND THE SECRET LOCATION WHERE THE INDIAN FAMILY DOES ITS EXECUTIONS !!
CHAK

ANGEL...

SKREEE



I've recovered
When this recovers...
PAT

SHA
So does everything else...

RRIP

INCLUDING MY VOICE!!

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO NOW? I'LL GRANT YOU ONE WISH, OKAY?
GO BACK TO THE HOSPITAL!
WHUMP

ARGH!
WHUD
WHIRR
WHIRRK
SHA
CHAK
M MAYO!
GO AHEAD AND SHOOT ME BUT...
...YOUR BOSS WON'T BE VERY HAPPY SCREWING A DEAD MAN.

S SIR.
ANGEL.
VROOOM
WHAT'S GOING ON, SIR?
S SIR.
HE DOESN'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT ME

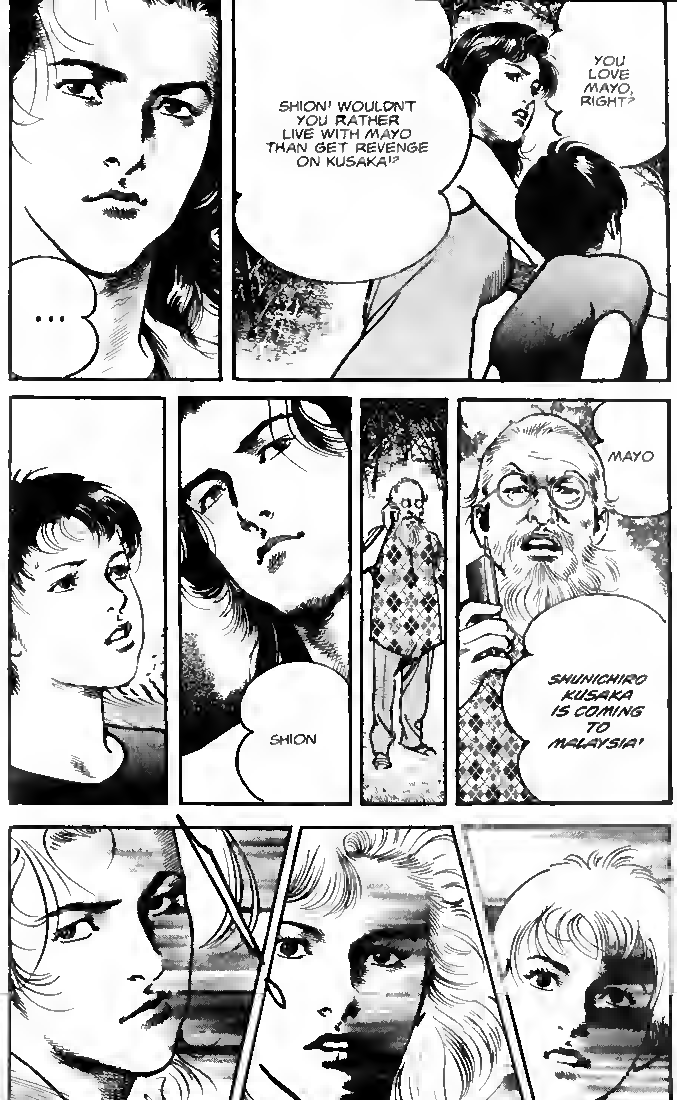
MMISTER MUROTA WHY ME?
I DUNNO MAN
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M DOING ANYMORE!

SHOULD BE SOME-WHERE AROUND HERE

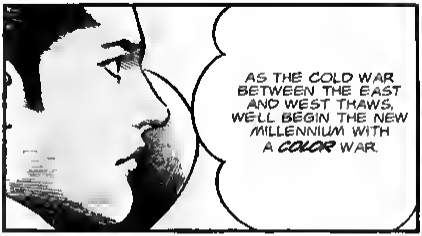
MAYO!

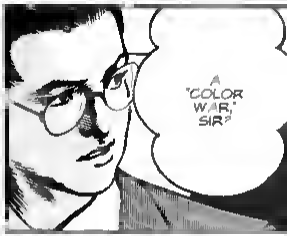
WHERE ARE THEY!?

!?
MUROTA DID WHAT!?
THAT'S RIGHT. HE LET US GO.
BUT ONLY ON ONE CONDITION THAT SHUNICHIRO NEVER LAYS EYES ON HER
ON SHION?
NODD
GRIP
MAYO!
MAYO! YOU CAN BE YOURSELF! AND SO CAN SHION!
WE'LL LEAVE KUSAKA BEHIND AND THE THREE OF US WILL GO LIVE SOMEWHERE ELSE TOGETHER FOR SHION'S SAKE
WE CAN'T LET HER BE KILLED!
PLEASE WE HAVE TO DO THIS FOR SHION

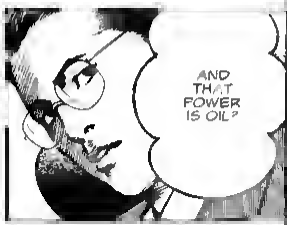

...
SHION! WOULDN'T YOU RATHER LIVE WITH MAYO THAN GET REVENGE ON KUSAKA!?
YOU LOVE MAYO, RIGHT?
SHION
MAYO
SHUNICHIRO KUSAKA IS COMING TO MALAYSIA!

LOOK, FUNADA
LOOK AT ALL THE WESTERNERS ON THIS FLIGHT — EVEN THOUGH IT'S BETWEEN TWO ASIAN COUNTRIES.
AND THERE WILL BE MORE


AS THE COLD WAR BETWEEN THE EAST AND WEST THAWS, WE'LL BEGIN THE NEW MILLENNIUM WITH A *COLOR* WAR.


A "COLOR WAR," SIR?

EUROPEAN WHITE MALES VERSUS ASIAN YELLOWS. A BATTLE BETWEEN THE WHITES AND YELLOWS
TO WIN, YOU MUST HAVE *POWER* POWER THAT ASIA HAS NEVER HAD

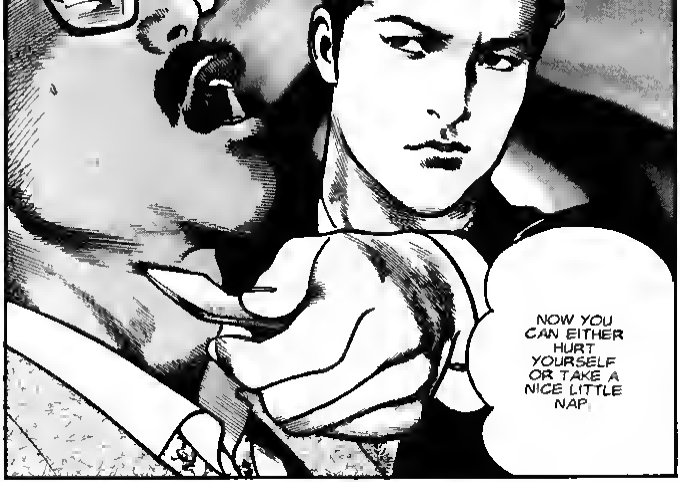

AND THAT POWER IS OIL"

NOT ONLY THAT...

AIEEE!

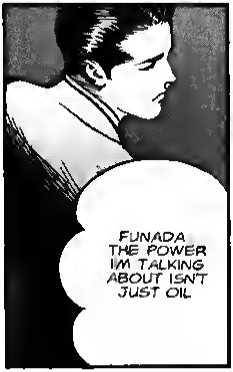
P-PLEASE, SIR!!
AWW, DON'T BE LIKE THAT... COME JOIN US.
WE PAID A LOT FOR EXTRA SERVICE!
DON'T BE SUCH A COLD BITCH. I CAN TELL FROM YOUR ASS YOUVE SEEN PLENTY OF ACTION..
SQUEE
N-NO!
SHA

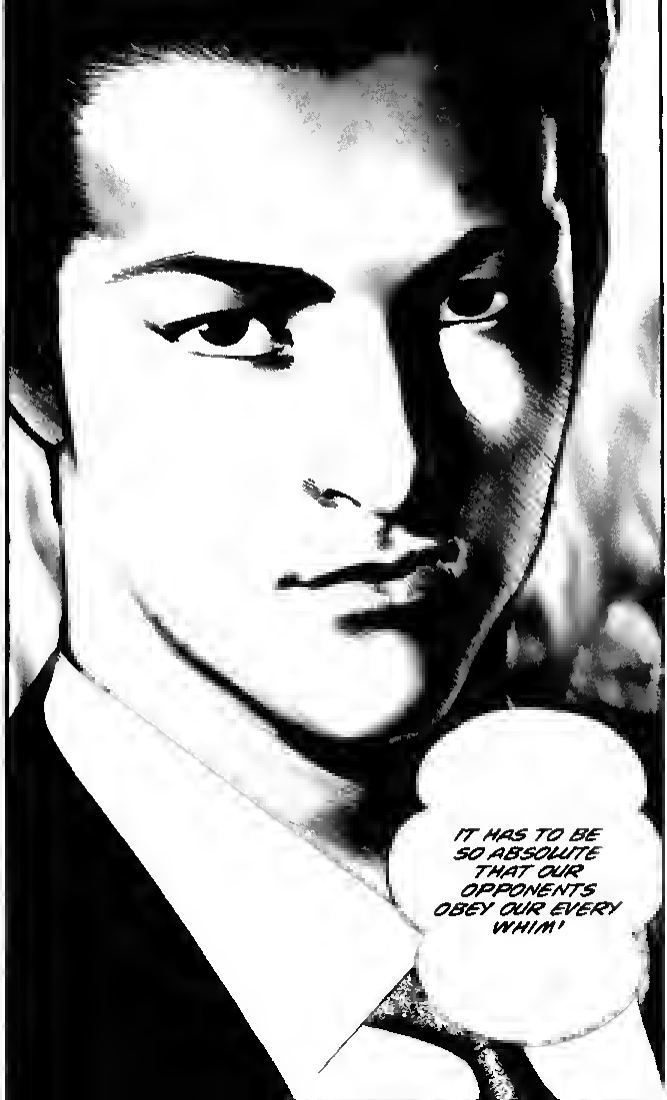
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
KLNGH
SPLORK
ARRGH!
SHA
W-WHAT THE—!?


NOW YOU CAN EITHER HURT YOURSELF OR TAKE A NICE LITTLE NAP.

ARGH.

NODD


FUNADA THE POWER I'M TALKING ABOUT ISN'T JUST OIL


IT HAS TO BE SO ABSOLUTE THAT OUR OPPONENTS OBEY OUR EVERY WHIM!

ROAR

IN THE BACK STREETS OF MALAYSIA, BLOOD RUNS THICK, BUT NOT THICKER THAN WATER...

PULP GRAPHIC NOVELS—COMPILING THE HOTTEST MANGA FROM THE PAGES OF VIZ COMICS' REVOLUTIONARY MANGA MAGAZINE FOR GROWNUPS!

His family megacorporation, KUSAKA, plans an Asian oil deal that might change the world. Chairman Shunichiro fears nothing but his own "strain," his rival heirs—half-brother Shingo, whom he regards as an aberrant bad seed, and his own daughter, Shion, the product of an old affair. Shunichiro's schemes left them both good as dead in the slums of Malaysia. Shingo, a five-dollar hit-man known as *Mayo*—"The Horse"; Shion, a would-be teen prostitute. Their allies are few: minor gangster, old Sei, and madam Kyoko. After the sadomasochistic cop Angel is hired by KUSAKA to finish Shingo and Shion, only to end up in a wheelchair, Shunichiro sends in the man who used to be *Kyoko*'s pimp, yakuza Murota. With family at the root of all this bloodshed, will Murota hesitate when Kyoko reveals she bore him a secret daughter?

***Buronson** is the acclaimed author of the political crime thriller* **Sanctuary** *and the post-apocalyptic action-adventure saga* **Fist of the North Star.**

***Ryoichi Ikegami** is the world-renowned artist whose gritty, realistic, and erotic artwork graces the pages of* **Sanctuary, Crying Freeman, Mai the Psychic Girl,** *and* **Samurai Crusader.** *He was awarded a coveted Ink Pot Award at the 1995 San Diego Comic Con*

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VOL.
3
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PULP GRAPHIC NOVEL

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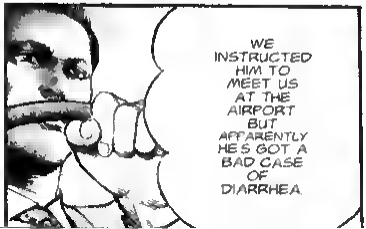
CHAPTER TWO
MY WAY

Motoko Ishizaki
International Hotel
3842-0101

KNOCK!

DID YOU TAKE CARE OF IT?

YES WE RECEIVED A MESSAGE FROM MUROTA HE DISPOSED OF SHION


WE INSTRUCTED HIM TO MEET US AT THE AIRPORT BUT APPARENTLY HE'S GOT A BAD CASE OF DIARRHEA

HIM? DIARRHEA?

HFF
HFF
HFF

HUF
HUF
HUF
GRMP
M MOM
P PLEASE I CANT..
A AGAIN?

H-HEY!
I TOLD YOU NOT TO GO IN THERE!
CHUD!
PHEW!
YOU BITCH. WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING, SELLING YOUR BODY WHEN YOU GOT A KID!
FWAP
HERE!
WHAP

DAMN!
KRAK
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME!?

WHUD
COME ON, LET'S GO!
IN THAILAND, THE THREE OF US CAN LIVE OFF MY SAVINGS!
WELL? MAYO? SHION?
ZOOP
I WONDER...
STRETCH
EVEN THAT GANGSTER LET ME GO WHEN HE FOUND OUT HE HAD A DAUGHTER MY AGE
SO WHY WOULD MY REAL FATHER WANT TO...?
I DON'T GET IT...

SH-SHION...
CHAK
KYOKO! TAKE SHION!
W WHAT ABOUT YOU?
He won't run away...
CHUD
MAYO...
MAYO... ANGEL WANTS A WORD WITH YOU

CHUD!
AND SHINGO'S BEEN TAKEN CARE OF TOO?
YES
HIS BRUTALLY RAPED BODY SHOULD BE DISCOVERED ANY MOMENT
I'D LIKE TO SEE IT

WHO DO YOU TAKE ME FOR, HUH?

SHA

CHAK

BLAM
BLAMM
BLAM

I MAKE UP MY REASONS AFTER THE FACT I CAN DO ANYTHING I WANT!
SHAA
GOT THAT?
I CAN DO YOU ANY TIME I WANT!
SQUEE

STILL THINK YOU CAN KICK ME AROUND?
STILL THINK YOU CAN TREAT ME LIKE CRAP? HUH!?

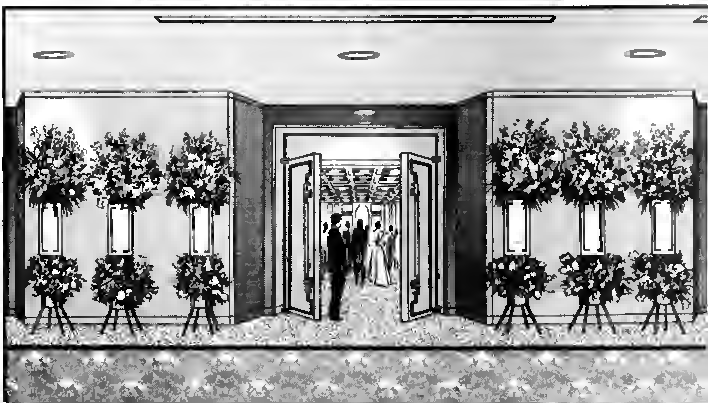
KRAK
KRAK
OOM

S SIR!
WHAT'S THE MATTER? WHY DON'T YOU JUST BLOW HIM AWAY!?
BLAM
YOU FELLAS MIGHT NOT HAVE ANY PROBLEM DOING THAT
BUT I SEEM TO.
ARGH!
WHAP
HAVE I LOST IT? OR IS HE THE ONE THAT'S OUT OF HIS MIND!?

A VISITOR ?
YEAH – SOME FLIGHT ATTENDANT HE MET ON THE PLANE
AHH..
I DON'T CHOOSE MY MEN ACCORDING TO THEIR STATUS OR CAREER.
DO YOU.. KNOW. WHO I AM?
WE'RE HAVING A PARTY TOMORROW EVENING YOU'RE WELCOME TO ATTEND.

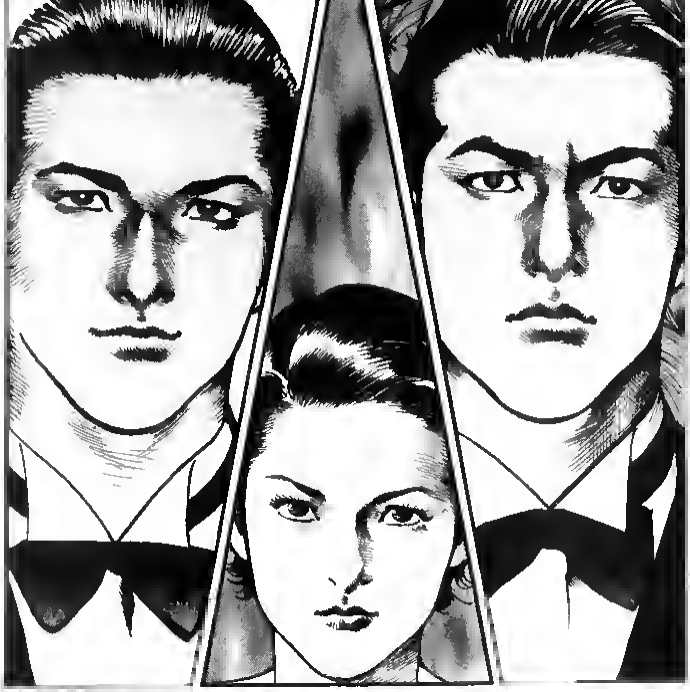
A PARTY !?
THAT'S RIGHT. FOR THE HEAD OF KUSAKA, SHUNICHIRO KUSAKA.
THE LAST PUSH FOR THE OIL EXCAVATION CONTRACTS.
ALL THE TOP INDUSTRY OFFICIALS WILL BE ATTENDING
CHAK!
SHION! I'M READY!
WE HAVE TO GET GOING!
SHION...
COME I'LL SEE YOU TWO TO THE AIRPORT

LEAVE ME ALONE!
NO...
WHAT !?
WHY DOES EVERYONE KEEP PUSHING ME AROUND!?
WHAT AM I!?
I HAVE FREE WILL! LET ME FIND MY OWN W. Y!!
SHION.



LOOK AT THAT FANCY ORCHESTRA
AND ALL THESE PROMINENT FIGURES IF A BOMB GOES OFF HERE, THAT'LL BE THE END OF MALAYSIA..
HERE HE IS -- THE GUEST OF HONOR

BLAMM
TMP TMP TMP



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CHAPTER THREE
PARTNERS

I APOLOGIZE FOR THE DISTURBANCE
PERMIT ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF
I AM SHINICHIRO KUSAKA'S YOUNGER BROTHER, SHINGO!
AND I AM SHINICHIRO'S DAUGHTER, SHION!

BROTHER ...!?
I DIDN'T KNOW HE HAD A DAUGHTER
MRMR
MRMR
DELIGHTED TO SEE YOU!

GRMP

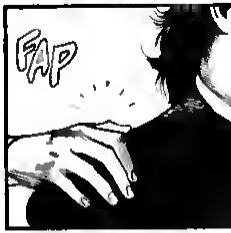
YOU BASTARD
NEXT TIME WE MEET YOU'LL BE SIX FEET UNDER!

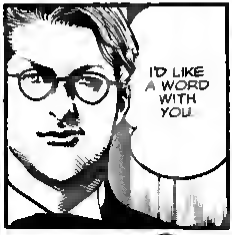
I SHOULD HAVE KILLED YOU WHILE YOUR MOTHER WAS PREGNANT

AS YOU CAN SEE, THE KUSAKA FAMILY HAS AN HEIR!
IF SHUNICHIRO KUSAKA SHOULD HAPPEN TO FALL, THE FAMILY LEGACY WILL CONTINUE!
IT IS OUR FERVENT HOPE THAT THIS PROJECT BE A GREAT SUCCESS!

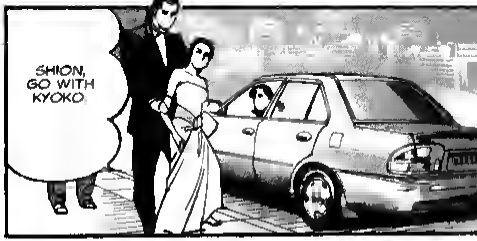
I WAS WORRIED SICK OVER YOU TWO

HONNK HONK
HURRY! THEY'RE GONNA COME AFTER YOU!


FAP


I'D LIKE A WORD WITH YOU.

...


SHION, GO WITH KYOKO.

FISK
WHAT NERVE! HE WAS ANNOUNCING HIS INTENTION TO TAKE OVER KUSAKA!
TERRIBLY SORRY, SIR
NO POINT IN BLAMING YOU IMBECILES

SH SHUN!
GET OUT OF MY SIGHT
NOW THAT YOU'RE NO LONGER A TRUE YAKUZA, YOU'RE WORTHLESS TO ME!
UHNN UHN

YOU'RE FOGG MACKEY FROM POWER REACH, AREN'T YOU?
YOU KNOW HIM?
HE FRONTS HIMSELF AS A JOURNALIST, BUT HE'S REALLY A LEECH FROM POWER REACH
HE FEEDS OFF THE DIRTY BLOOD OF THE FINANCIAL WORLD
SO WHAT'S HE WANT WITH ME?
I'D LIKE TO KNOW THE TRUE STORY BEHIND YOU, THAT GIRL, AND SHUNICHIRO KUSAKA.

THIS LEECH SMELLS SOMETHING VALUABLE ABOUT THE THREE OF YOU
WHAT'S IT TO YOU?
NOT EVERY MALAYSIAN REPRESENTATIVE IS GUNG HO ABOUT THIS OIL PROJECT
AT LEAST A FIFTH OF THEM ARE OPPOSED TO IT.
SNAP
IF WE CREATE A SCANDAL AROUND SHUNICHIRO AND KUSAKA...
...THEN THIS OPPOSITION PARTY COULD WIN
A LEECH NEVER LETS GO, ONCE IT STARTS TO SUCK

YOUVE GOT THE BACKING OF...
WHITE EUROPEAN OIL CARTELS, EH?
THAT'S FOR YOU TO FIND OUT.
SH
FF
CHAK
IF I WANTED TO END THE PROJECT, I WOULD HAVE BLOWN AWAY SHUNICHIRO THEN AND THERE!

BLAM

I MEAN TO INHERIT KUSAKA, NOT DESTROY IT.

MAYO...
SAI...
SHF
INTRODUCE ME TO YOUR BOSS
COME ON, SAI
WITH YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNDERWORLD IT ISN'T HARD TO FIGURE OUT
YOU'RE A MEMBER OF THE SAI FAMILY
THE FAMILY THAT RULES THE CHINESE MAFIA AROUND THE WORLD
...
NO USE DENYING IT
WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GAIN?

TO PROTECT SHION
. I NEED A VERY POWERFUL PARTNER

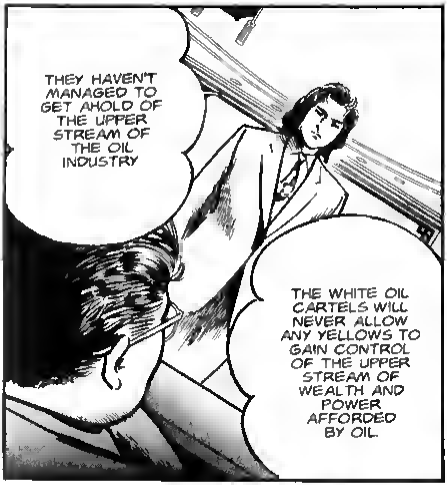
MY UNCLE HAS FILLED ME IN ON THE DETAILS
SO YOU ARE SHUNICHIRO KUSAKA'S BROTHER

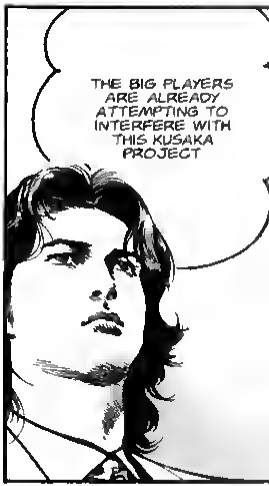
YES.

WHOOSH
DO YOU DESPISE FAT PEOPLE?
WHAPP
I FIND THEM HIDEOUS.
WAIT OVER THERE.
WE'LL TALK AFTER MY SWIM.
GLUMP
SPLOOSH H

I SEE
I ASSUME THAT'S OF INTEREST TO YOU
ONCE I INHERIT KUSAKA, YOU'LL GET FIFTY PERCENT OF THE OIL RIGHTS TO MALAYSIA
BUT WHAT DO I HAVE TO GAIN THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP WITH YOU?
FIFTY PERCENT OF THE OIL RIGHTS!?

YOUR FAMILY HAS AN INCREDIBLE INFLUENCE ON THE WORLD ECONOMY.
BUT THERE IS ONE SECTOR THEY HAVE NO CONTROL OVER.


THEY HAVEN'T MANAGED TO GET AHOLD OF THE UPPER STREAM OF THE OIL INDUSTRY
THE WHITE OIL CARTELS WILL NEVER ALLOW ANY YELLOWS TO GAIN CONTROL OF THE UPPER STREAM OF WEALTH AND POWER AFFORDED BY OIL.


THE BIG PLAYERS ARE ALREADY ATTEMPTING TO INTERFERE WITH THIS KUSAKA PROJECT

BY TEAMING UP WITH ME, THE SAI FAMILY CAN BECOME AN ASIAN BIG PLAYER!
WHICH WOULD ENABLE YOU TO TRANSFORM YOUR UNDERWORLD FAMILY INTO A LEGITIMATE ORGANIZATION!

OUR ALLIANCE WOULD PROVIDE YOU WITH THE MEANS TO UNDERGO A MAJOR TRANS FORMATION!
ARE YOU A BUSINESS MAN?
NO UNTIL YESTERDAY I WAS AN ASSASSIN.
FAP
IN OUR WORLD, PROFIT ALWAYS COMES FIRST!
I ASSURE YOU, MY ANSWER WILL BE FAVORABLE

CHUD
CAN YOU STAY A MOMENT, UNCLE?
I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO SOMEONE
HMM..?
CHAK
UNCLE
THIS IS MY PARTNER SHUNICHIRO KUSAKA!

STRAIN
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CHAPTER FOUR
THE FUTURE

PARTNERS
CLASS-MATES!?
HE AND I WERE CLASS MATES
YOU SEE
IN ENGLAND ?
WE FIRST MET WHEN I WAS STUDYING ABROAD AT OXFORD UNIVERSITY
THAT'S RIGHT

chmp
chmp

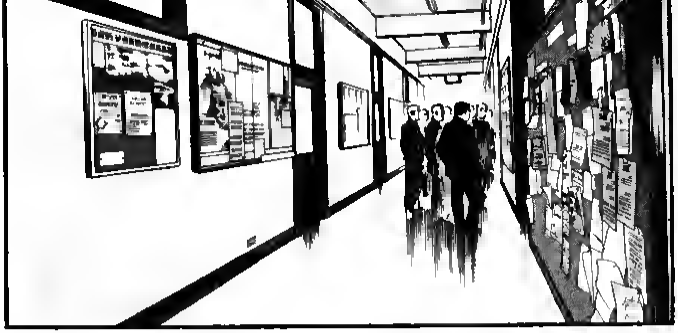
YUCK.

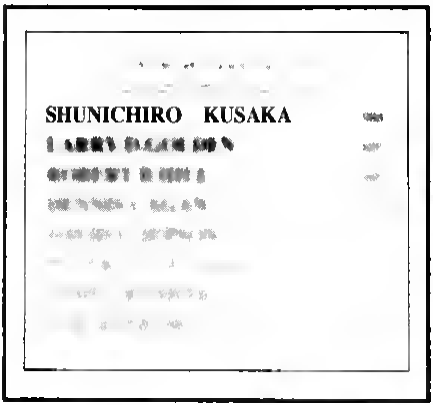
KW
ASH

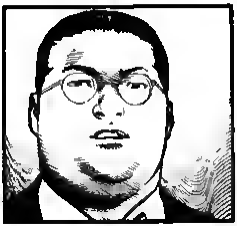
FWIK

LOOKS LIKE ENGLISH CUISINE DOESN'T SUIT YOU EITHER

FWIP
I'M SHIME! SAI FROM MALAYSIA.
SHUNICHIRO KUSAKA FROM JAPAN
KLAK
I WAS SURPRISED TO FIND ANOTHER ASIAN AT OXFORD
BUT I WAS EVEN MORE SURPRISED BY WHAT FOLLOWED




SHUNICHIRO KUSAKA



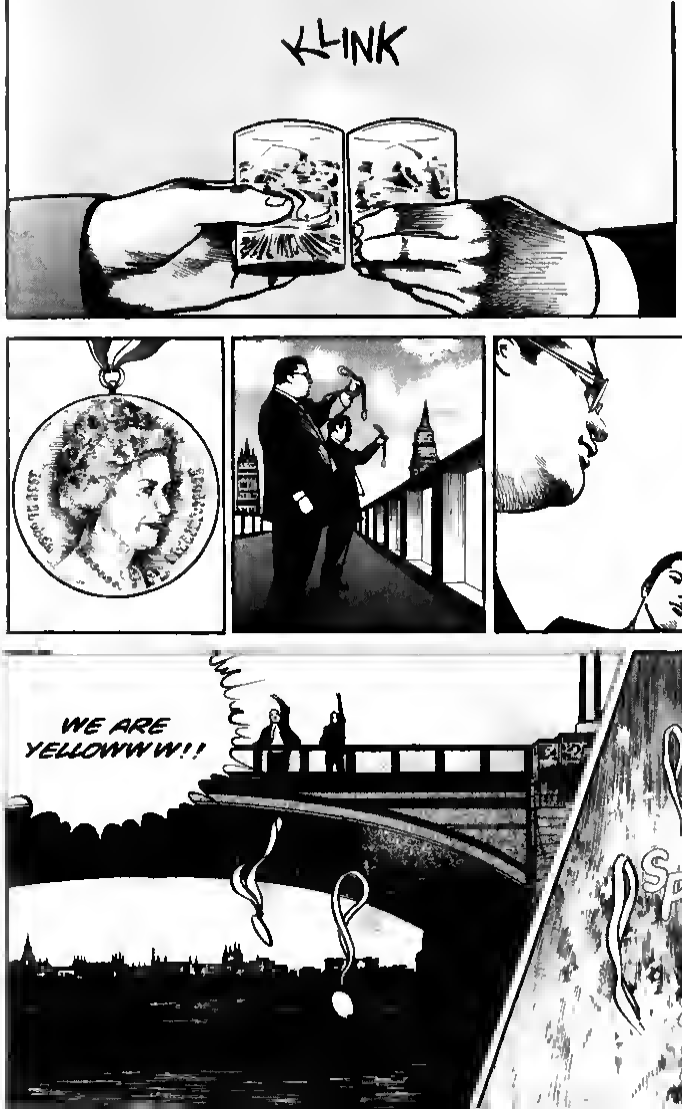
GRIP

I had found someone who scored as high as I did!

FWEEEE
And he wasn't all brains and no brawn.
AHRR
THOK
FAP
TMP
TMP

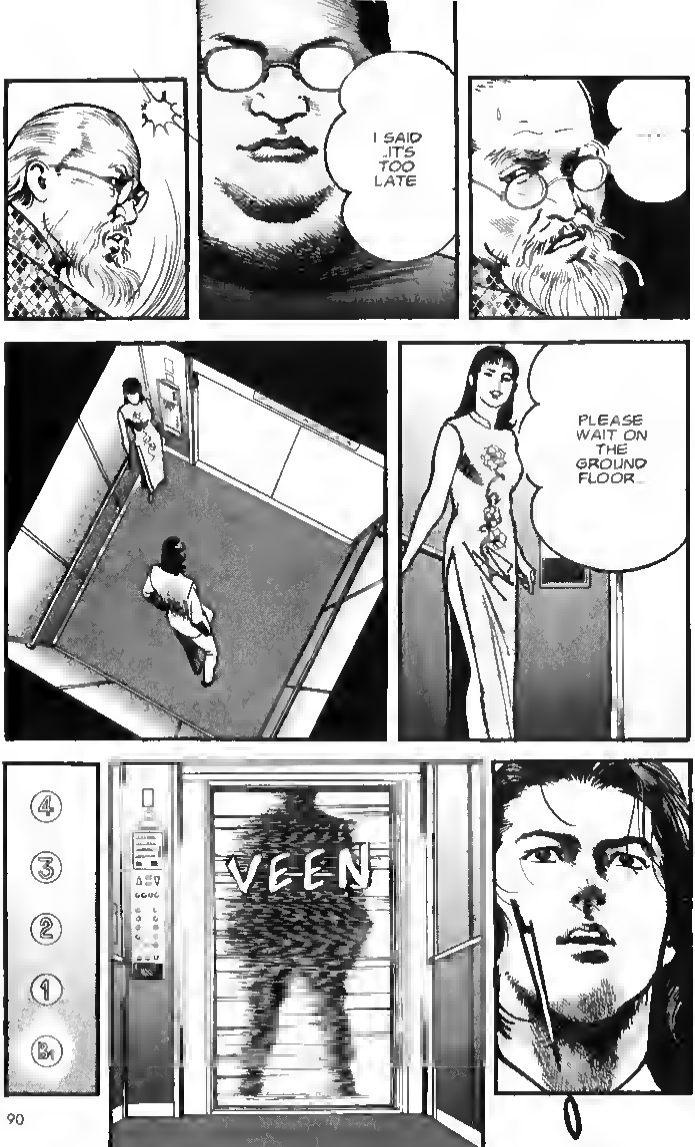
WUMPSH

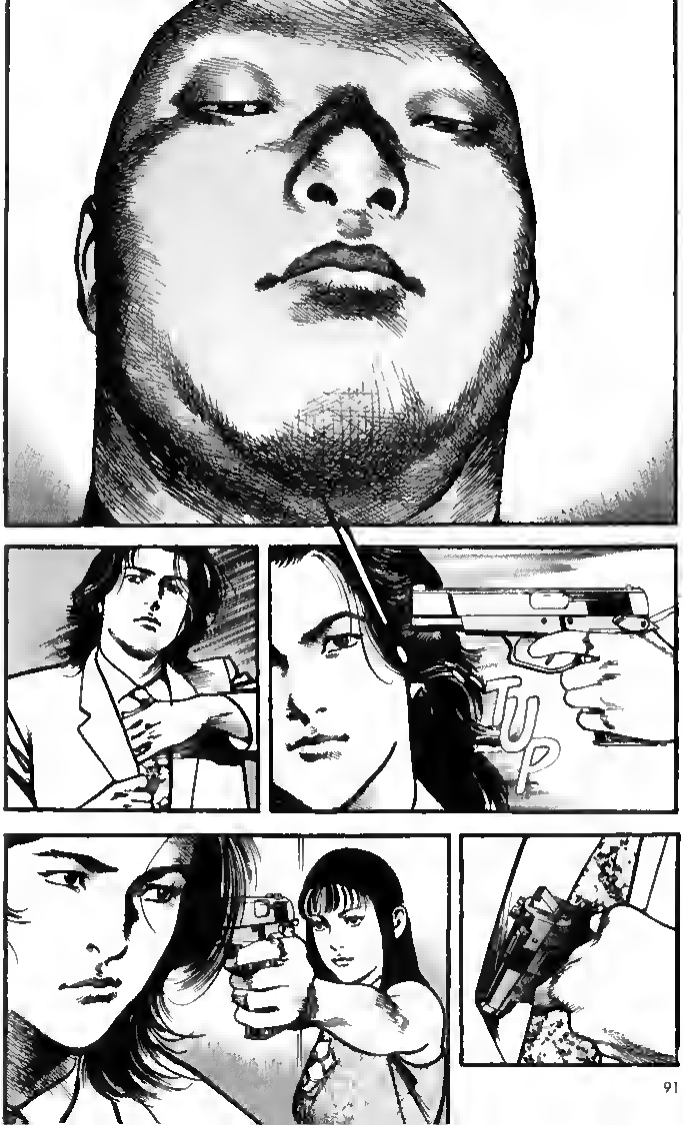
THE OXFORD ELITE WERE TAKEN ABACK BY THESE TWO YELLOW ASIANS.
...
IT WAS NO SURPRISE THAT WE WERE BOTH AWARDED A MEDAL OF HONOR FOR OUR PERFORM ANCE AT OXFORD—


KLINK
WE ARE YELLOWWW!!
SPLISH

YOU THREW AWAY YOUR MEDALS
SO YOU UNDER STAND
HOW THIS MAN BECAME MY PARTNER
THE ONLY THING THAT'S CHANGED SINCE THEN IS THE SHAPE OF MY STOMACH!
TUMPI
THAT KID'S GOT NOTHING!
HE'S JUST A COMMON THUG!

WE HAVE A COMMON VISION!
SOMETHING BEYOND A SINGLE FAMILY IT ENCOMPASSES ALL YELLOWS!
AND I'M GOING TO GET RID OF THAT THUG, UNCLE KENCHU
IT'S TOO LATE!


I SAID IT'S TOO LATE
PLEASE WAIT ON THE GROUND FLOOR...
4
3
2
1
B1
VEEN


TUP

THWAK!
WH
UNNH

WHUMP
Unhh
MP
ARSH!
DON'T WORRY, I WON'T KILL YOU YET
FOR NOW, YOU'LL BE OUR TARGET.
SNIK
KREEEEE
HYUUU
ALL RIGHT TIME FOR YOU FELLAS TO START YOUR TRAINING
TAKE YOUR FIRST SLICE OUT OF A REAL BODY

HF HF
HF
TO BECOME A VALUED MEMBER OF THE SAI FAMILY, YOU MUST LEARN
...EACH OF THE BODY'S VITAL SPOTS. THIS CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED THROUGH RIGOROUS TRAINING
WHOOSH
KRAK
WHK
STABB

STK
He took it in his thigh just to get the knife!
HA HA HA... WHY WORK SO HARD?
N-NO...
EVEN IF YOU MAKE IT, WHAT YOU'VE BEEN WORKING SO HARD TO PROTECT WON'T BE THERE ANY MORE

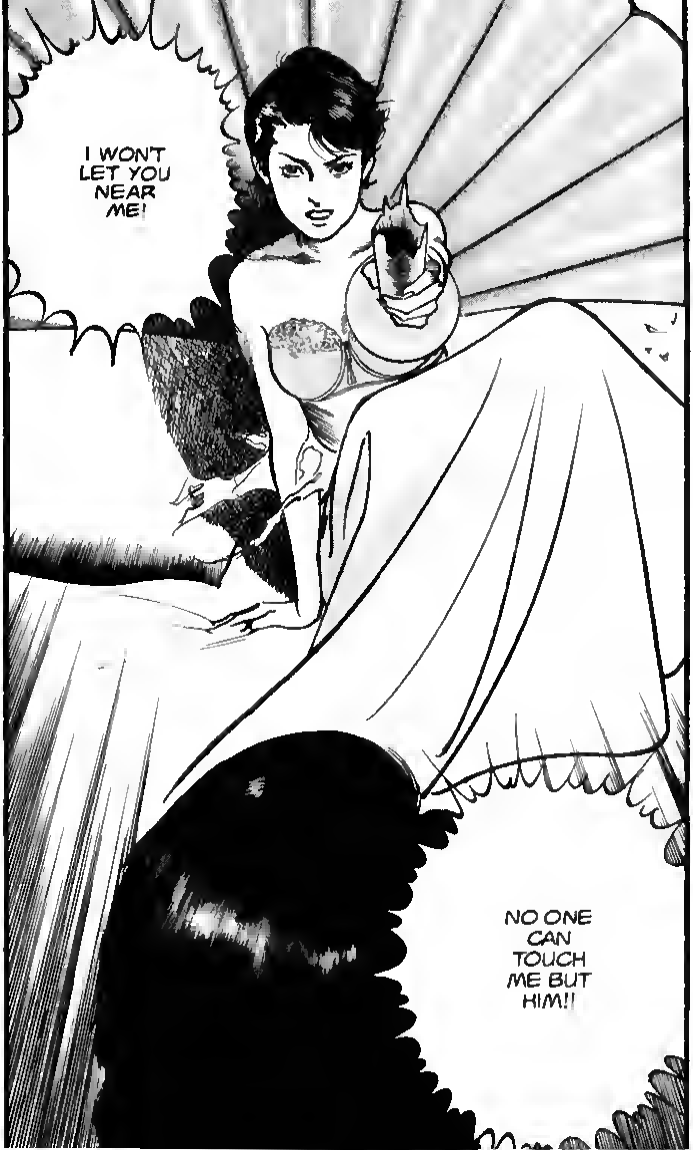
THOSE GUYS HAVE IT EASY
TWO CHICKS.. WON'T EVEN NEED A KNIFE
SH-SHION
KRAK
WHUMP
GO, SHION!! GET OUT OF HERE!

JAK
HEH HEH
ZOOP
THE GIRL'S LUCKY SHE'LL LIVE A LITTLE LONGER.
THAT GUY JUST LOVES LITTLE GIRLS.
SH-SHION..

UMP
FW
FWAP
STILL WON'T GIVE UP, EH?

NO!
WE FINALLY FOUND OUR WAY...
IF I GIVE UP, WE'LL LOSE OUR FUTURE!

RRIPP
FAP
KRESH


I WON'T LET YOU NEAR ME!
NO ONE CAN TOUCH ME BUT HIM!!

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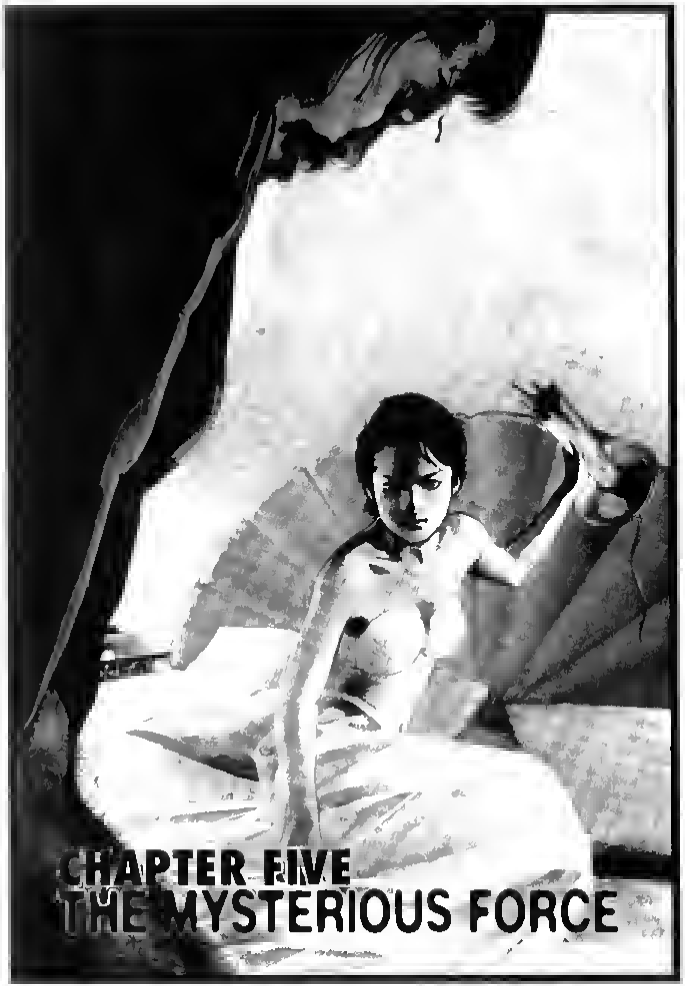
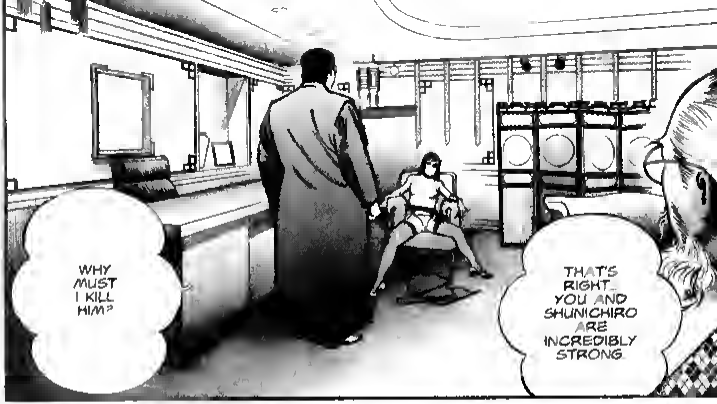
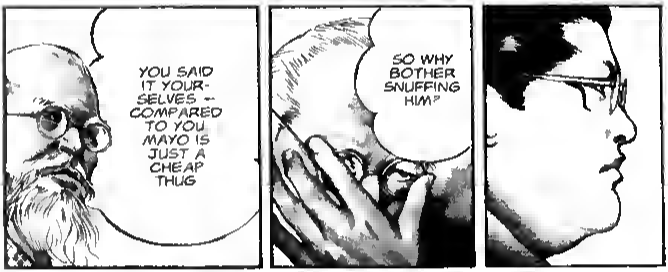

CHAPTER FIVE
THE MYSTERIOUS FORCE

FAP
BLA
MM


WHY MUST I KILL HIM?
THAT'S RIGHT- YOU AND SHUNICHIRO ARE INCREDIBLY STRONG.


YOU SAID IT YOURSELVES -- COMPARED TO YOU, MAYO IS JUST A CHEAP THUG
SO WHY BOTHER SNUFFING HIM?

I COULD AS WELL ASK YOU... WHY THEN, UNCLE, DO YOU PROTECT HIM?
SINCE HE IS, AFTER ALL, "JUST A CHEAP THUG"
BECAUSE... WELL...
YET YOU INSIST ON HELPING HIM
UNCLE!
SQUEE
YOUR RASH BEHAVIOR ASTONISHES ME. YOU AREN'T ACTING IN YOUR SELF INTEREST.

THAT MAN HAS A MYSTERIOUS FORCE

MEN LIKE HIM ARE A DANGER TO THOSE OF US IN POWER

THE FUTURE... HUH...
FAP
WH
U
M
P

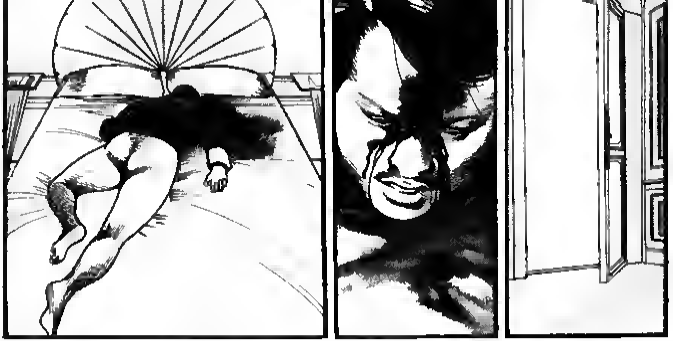
WHUMP
SHA
KU
N
C
H

EH!?
KRAK
UNH!
FAP
WHUD
DMP
DMP
URG!

KR
E
K
SN
AK
AND YOUR FUTURE ENDS RIGHT HERE.

FWIP
FWAP

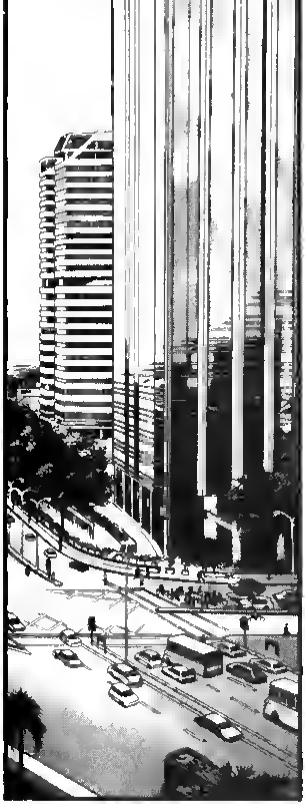
I-I'M FLOATING...
WHO IS IT? S-SAI?

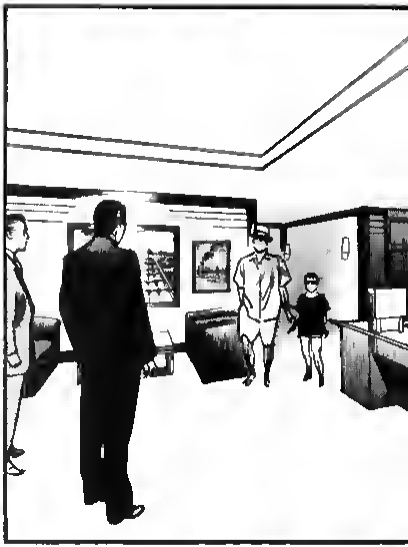


W-WHY DID YOU ?

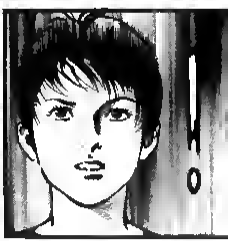
DON'T GET ME WRONG. I DIDN'T COME HERE TO SAVE YOU

WHAT I?
IF YOU KEPT YOUR PROMISE AND SPLIT, NONE OF THIS WOULDA HAPPENED
SHION — GET DRESSED
Y-YOU'RE NOT GOING TO_
I JUST DON'T GET IT
AND I'M TOO STUPID TO FIGURE IT OUT!
SO I GOTTA FIND OUT FOR MYSELF!





FWIP



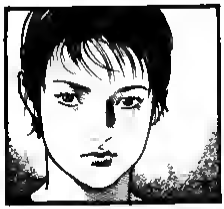
WHAT'S GOING ON, MUROTA?
WHIP
FAP
SHUNICHIRO
CAN YOU SHOOT THIS GIRL?
SQUEE

I NEED TO KNOW WHETHER...
...YOU CAN REALLY KILL YOUR OWN DAUGHTER!

WELL..?
WE FAILED ON BOTH FRONTS!
THE POLICE HAVE HIM IN THEIR CUSTODY
POLICE!?
S-SO ANGEL..!?

ANGEL...
THANK.. YOU...
"TH-THANK YOU"?

WELL..
?



TMP

SHION

I need to know too..

SHAA

WHAT'S THERE TO KNOW?

YELP
MY HEART IS
SQUEE
SQUEE

KLIK
EMPTY..
WHAT'S GOING ON, MUROTA?
...
YOU PULLED THE TRIGGER..
..ON YOUR OWN DAUGHTER..
KL
N
G

FAPP
MUROTA..
FWAP
CHAK

SHUNICHIRO YOU'VE CHANGED...
WHAT HAPPENED?

YOU'RE NOT THE SHUNICHIRO I USED TO KNOW— THE SHUNICHIRO WHO HELD MY MAMA IN HIS ARMS!

"THANK YOU"... HUH!
NO ONE'S EVER SAID THAT TO ME BEFORE...

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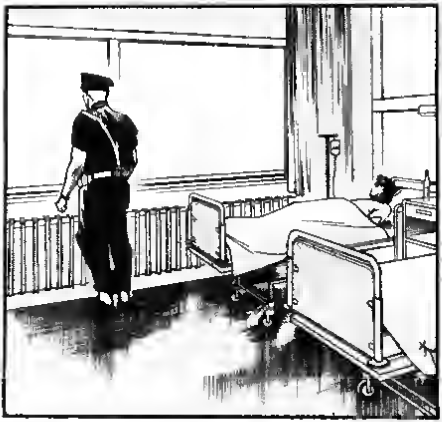
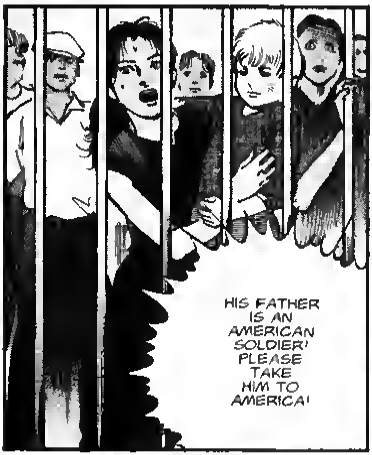
CHAPTER SIX
UNGUARDED



ROARR

ROARR
1975,
Vietnam
The Fall of
Saigon
ROARR
ROARR

P-PLEASE! TAKE HIM!

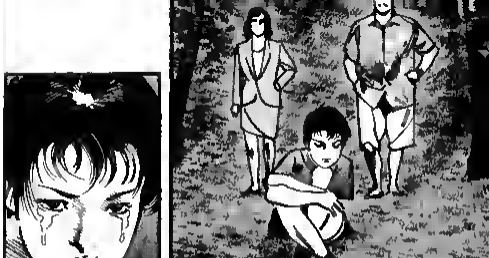

HIS FATHER IS AN AMERICAN SOLDIER! PLEASE TAKE HIM TO AMERICA!

NO!

HUF HUF
HUF

TUGG
P- PLEASE TH THIS BOY NEEDS WATER PLEASE JUST A SIP
WHAT THE !?
IT'S THANKS TO THIS KID'S FATHER'S COUNTRY THAT WE'RE IN THIS MESS!

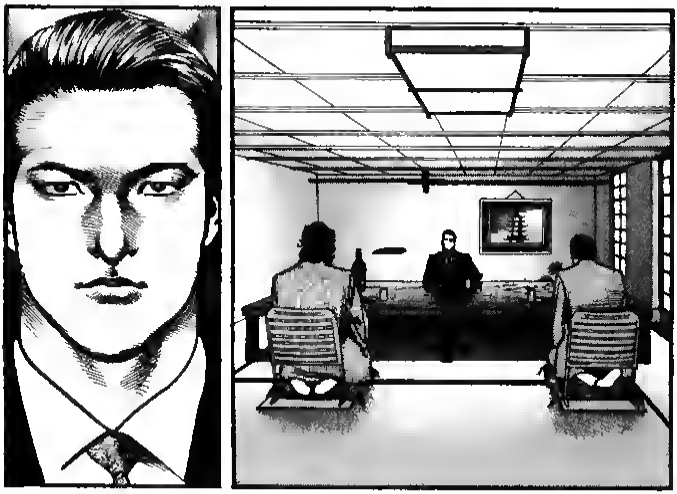
GOD-DAMN WHORE!
PTU!
NO ONE HAS EVER
...THANKED ME FOR ANYTHING



SO YOUR FATHER TOOK A SHOT AT YOU, HUH...?
DO SOMETHING FOR HER, WILL YA?

I KNEW... YOU WERE GOOD AT HEART.
OH YEAH? I'M JUST A DUMB THUG!

SHUNI-
CHIRO.
I MIGHT SEEM LIKE A NOBODY TO SOMEONE LIKE YOU
BUT I'M PRETTY HAPPY WITH MYSELF RIGHT NOW...

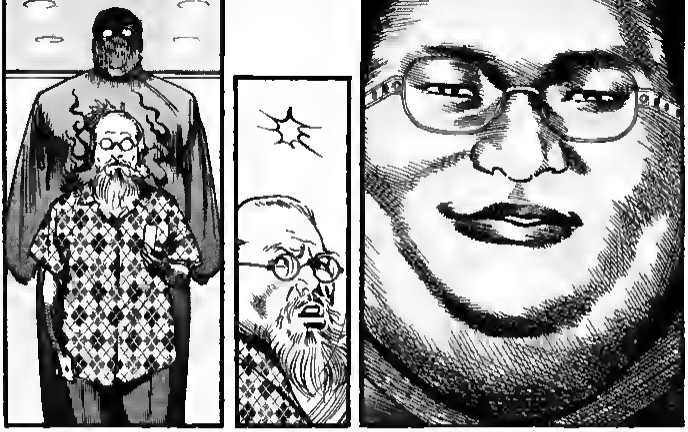


YOU DIDN'T THINK I'D PULL THE TRIGGER DID YOU, AOKI?
UH-H!
AOKI!
S-SIR!
GIVE ME YOUR LOYALTY, BUT—
DON'T EVER EXPECT ME TO RETURN IT!

LOYALTY IS SUPERFLUOUS IN MY WORLD!
THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS IS POWER!
AND WHAT IF THIS POWER WEAKENS?
IN THE WORLD I FIGHT IN...
YOU GET EATEN ALIVE...
THE BRUTUSES FAR OUTNUMBER THE FAITHFUL!!

R-REALLY? MAYO'S ALL RIGHT?

YES! I DON'T UNDER-STAND IT, BUT ANGEL SAVED HIM.
AS SOON AS I KNOW MORE, I'LL CONTACT YOU!
BIP!

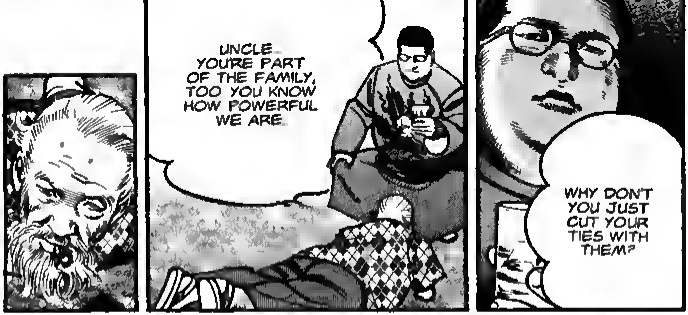


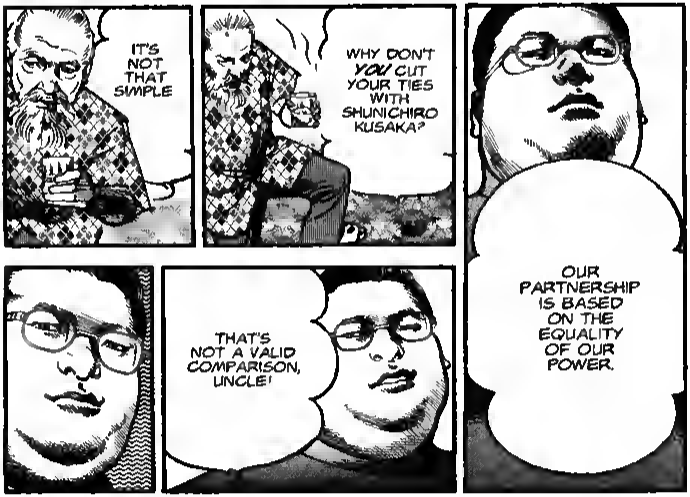
YES...
GUESS I'M NOT THE ONLY FOOL AROUND HERE...

OKAY..
GRMP
FIRST OFF, WE GOTTA GET THE TWO OF YA OUT OF MALAYSIA!
ONCE YOU'RE IN THAILAND, YOU SHOULD BE HOME FREE

I'VE GOT SOME CONNECTIONS THERE
BOOM
IF THERE'S ONE THING A GANGSTER KNOWS, IT'S HOW TO SPLIT TOWN!
AIEE!
VROOM
THOK
KOFF! KOFF!

THAT'S ENOUGH. AFTER ALL, WE ARE RELATED.


UNCLE... YOU'RE PART OF THE FAMILY, TOO YOU KNOW HOW POWERFUL WE ARE.
WHY DON'T YOU JUST CUT YOUR TIES WITH THEM?


IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE
WHY DON'T *YOU* CUT YOUR TIES WITH SHUNICHIRO KUSAKA?
OUR PARTNERSHIP IS BASED ON THE EQUALITY OF OUR POWER.
THAT'S NOT A VALID COMPARISON, UNCLE!

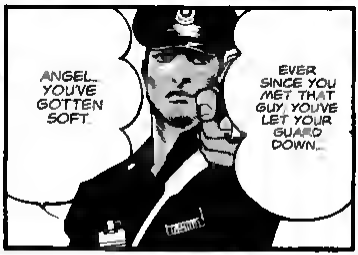
...
IF THE BALANCE SHIFTS, THE OTHER WILL BITE BACK IMMEDIATELY!

THE TRUST YOU SPEAK OF LEAVES YOU UN-GUARDED
IT'S A WEAKNESS THAT MAKES YOU VULNERABLE
THAT'S WHY TRUST IS SUCH A DANGER TO US! THAT'S WHY WE CANNOT PERMIT IT!
SL!SH
ARGH!

VIP
KEEP A CLOSE WATCH..
WE'RE DEALING WITH THE SAI FAMILY YOUVE GOT TO STAY ALERT..
HERE
CHAK
CHAK
KLANG

WHAT'S GOING ON?
POLIS
VEEEEEEEN
POLIS
CHIEF!
YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, SHOULD KNOW THAT THE DEPARTMENT FOLLOWS THE ORDERS OF THE SAI FAMILY
VROOOOM

UNNH!


ANGEL, YOU'VE GOTTEN SOFT.
EVER SINCE YOU MET THAT GUY, YOU'VE LET YOUR GUARD DOWN...

YOU NEVER ONCE OFFERED ANYONE A CIGARETTE BEFORE.

YOU'RE THROUGH
WE WOULDN'T FOLLOW YOU ANYWHERE ANYMORE

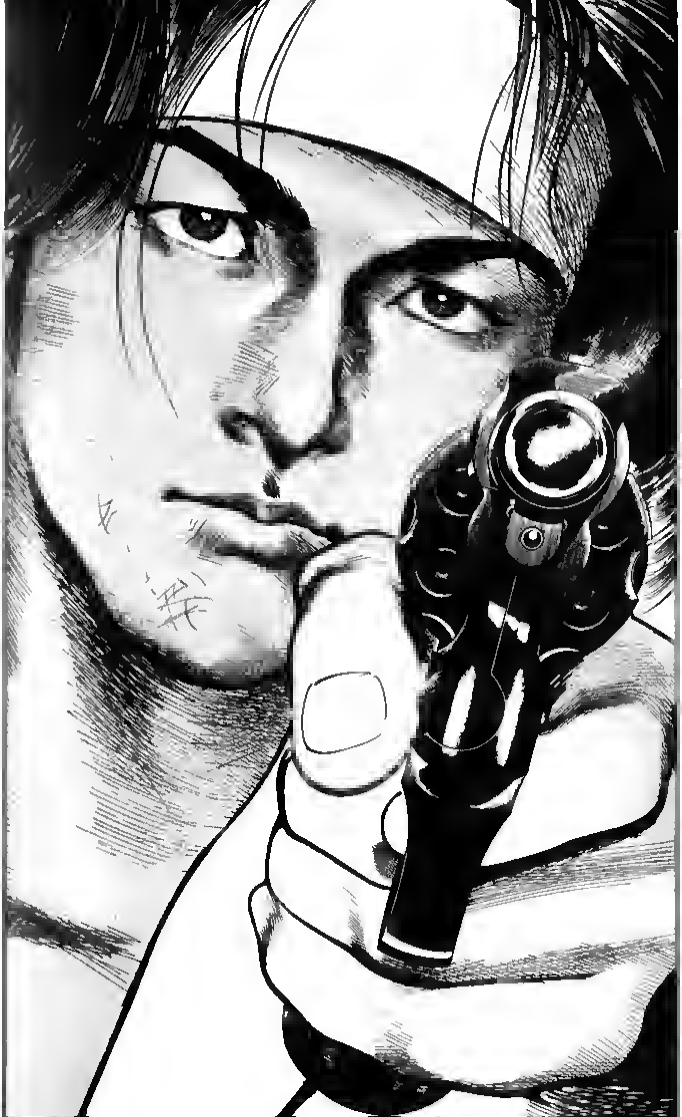
I LOST MY EYE...
UMMP
KOFF!
WH
...TH, NKS TO YOU!!
CHOMP

A-A-ARGH!
SPTOO
GET OUT OF HERE, MAYO! RUN!
ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL
DON'T SHOOT! DON'T DO HIM YET!

S
PWAK
YOU WON'T DIE THAT EASILY!

FWHUD

HUH HUH
HUH
IVE HAD ENOUGH
ZOOP
CHAK
SQUEE
BLAM
SPLTCH



WHY DIDN'T YOU GO?
GUESS I DIDN'T WANT TO...

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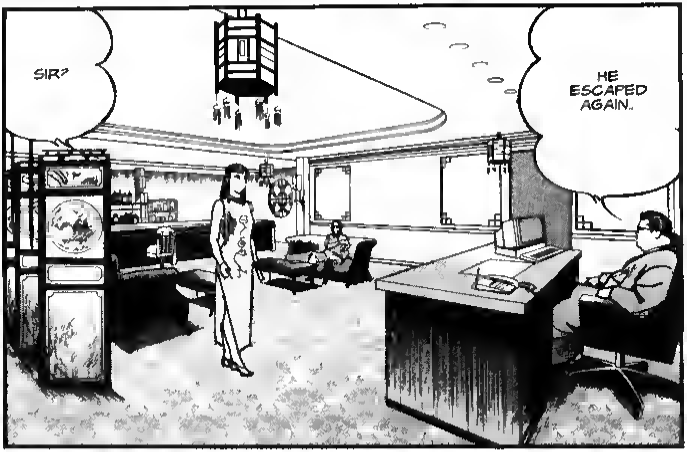
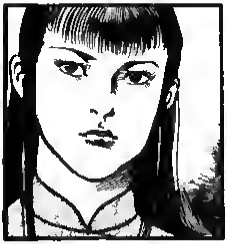
CHAPTER SEVEN
HURRY

KACHING!


SIR?
HE ESCAPED AGAIN..

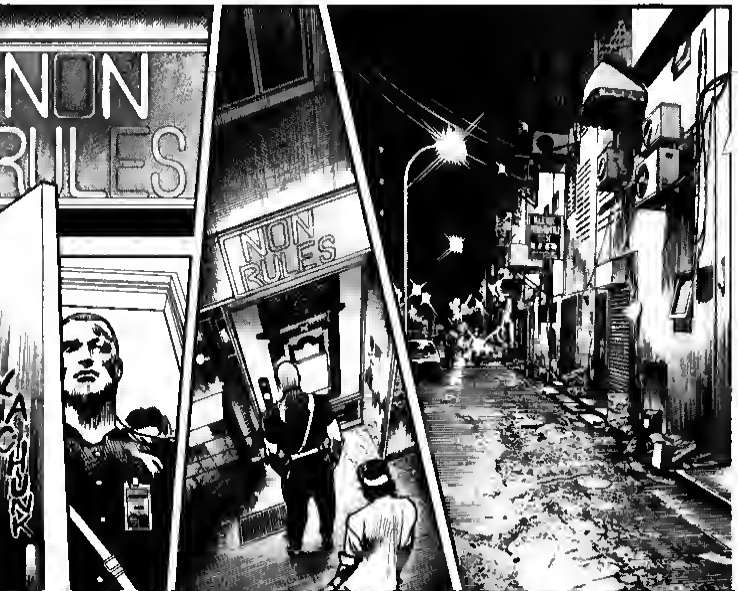


THAILAND
..?

WE'LL BE SAFE THERE
WE'LL KEEP YOU UPDATED! YOU HAVE TO DO THE SAME!
WE'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU!

FWOO
SHUNICHIRO
ONE BY ONE, EVERY-ONE'S LEAVIN' YA.

VIP
SO THE KID'S ALL RIGHT, HUH?
UH-HUH
LET'S GO THEN WE GOTTA GET MOVING


NON
RULES
NON
RULES

KREEK

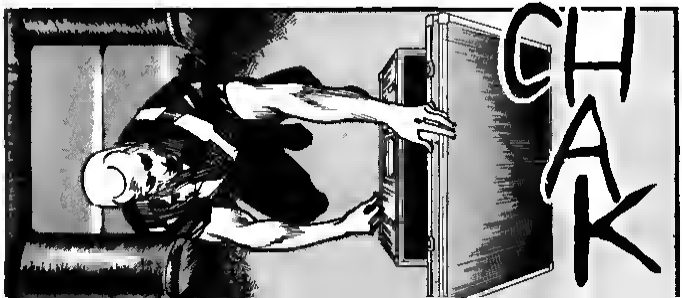
FWOOSH
IT'S ME
ANGEL
YOU'RE IN BAD SHAPE THIS'LL MAKE THE PAIN GO AWAY
WHD

WE'VE BEEN HOLDING ONTO THIS. SO NOW YOU'RE GOING TO USE IT?
YEAH.
THESE TWO GUYS ARE JUST LIKE ME
THEY LOOK AMERICAN BUT—
—THEIR MOTHERS WERE VIETNAMESE AND THEIR FATHERS AMERICAN SOLDIERS.

AFTER THE FALL OF SAIGON WE HAD NOWHERE TO GO, SO WE ENDED UP BEING REFUGEES IN THAILAND..
..AND MADE OUR WAY TO MALAYSIA.

...

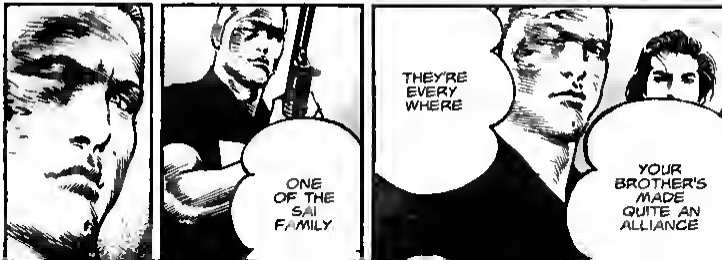
I DON'T EVEN WANT TO THINK ABOUT THOSE TIMES.


CHAK

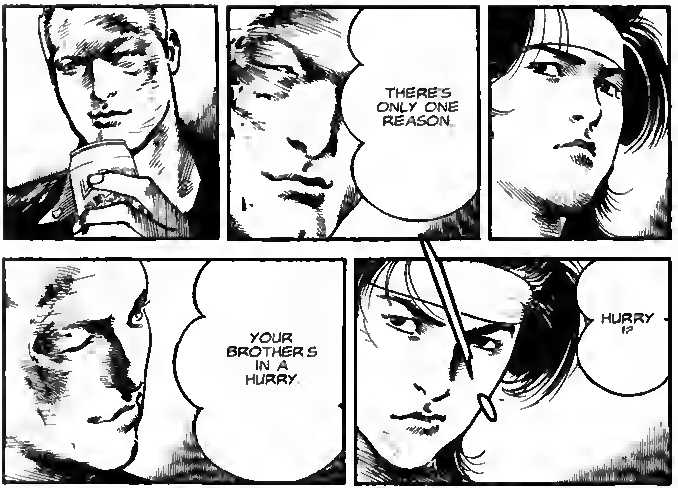
THIS WAS FOR OUR TRIP BACK TO THE U.S.A.
TO SHOW OUR LOVE TO THE PRESIDENT
KA
KLATCH

JUST LIKE YOU, I WAS SACRIFICED FOR THE SAKE OF POWER GAMES.
Kritch...
BL
AM

SP
PLAK
FW


ONE OF THE SAI FAMILY
THEY'RE EVERY WHERE
YOUR BROTHER'S MADE QUITE AN ALLIANCE

THAT'S WHAT I DON'T GET
AS RISKY AS IT WAS, I WENT TO THE SAI FAMILY BECAUSE I NEEDED THEIR POWER.
BUT WHY WOULD MY BROTHER SHUNICHIRO NEED THEIR POWER, KNOWING HOW DANGEROUS THEY ARE?
SHUNICHIRO WOULD NEVER RELY ON ANYONE BESIDES HIMSELF


THERE'S ONLY ONE REASON.
YOUR BROTHER'S IN A HURRY.
HURRY !?

OTHERWISE WHY RUSH INTO THE LION'S DEN?

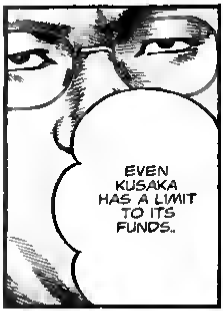
YOU WANT ME TO KILL MAYO!?
IF YOU WANT TO REGAIN MY TRUST
WHY DON'T YOU PROVE YOUR LOYALTY TO THE SAI FAMILY, UNCLE?
YOU THINK I GIVE A SHIT ABOUT THE FAMILY..?
I COULDN'T CARE LESS IF YOU THREW ME OUT

IF ANYTHING I MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO SHOOT YOU WITH THIS GUN.
SHALL I SHOOT HIM, SIR?
THERE'S NO HURRY

I'M NOT AS IMPATIENT AS HIM!
IMPATIENT?
DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH MONEY KUSAKA INVESTED IN THE OIL PROJECT?
...
SATELLITE RESEARCH, TEST DRILLINGS, HUMAN RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT
PROJECT FUNDS TO BRIBE THE GOVERNMENT AND INTEREST GROUPS. KUSAKA FOOTS THE ENTIRE BILL.
FUP
IT MIGHT VERY WELL EXCEED THE ANNUAL BUDGET OF A SMALL ASIAN NATION IN FACT, WITH THAT KIND OF MONEY YOU COULD BUY THAT NATION

SHP

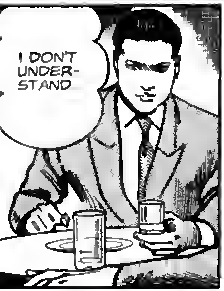
BUT THEY HAVEN'T GOTTEN ANY POSITIVE RESULTS FROM THE TEST DRILLINGS
AND WITHOUT ANY RESULTS THERE WON'T BE ANY CONTRACTS WITH THE GOVERNMEN

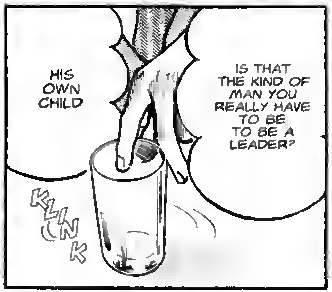

EVEN KUSAKA HAS A LIMIT TO ITS FUNDS..

FWISH

WHETHER THEY HIT OIL OR NOT, OR WHETHER HIS CAPITAL DRIES OUT

SHUNICHIRO KUSAKA IS WALKING ON A WIRE RIGHT NOW!


I DON'T UNDER-STAND


HIS OWN CHILD
IS THAT THE KIND OF MAN YOU REALLY HAVE TO BE TO BE A LEADER?
KLINK

...

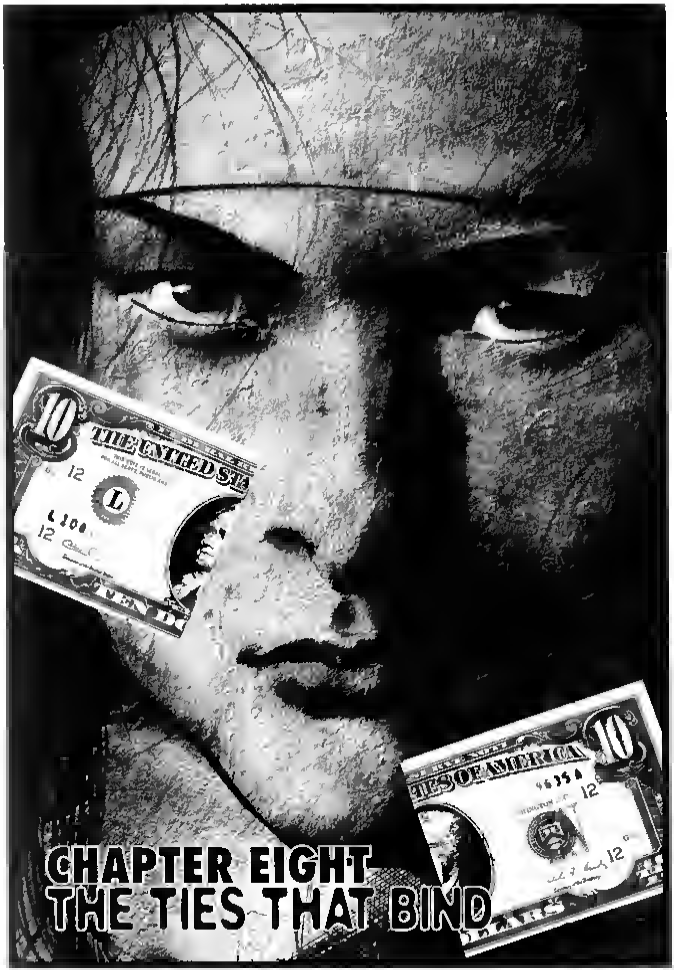
SHUNICHIRO IS TESTING BOTH HIMSELF AND KUSAKA!

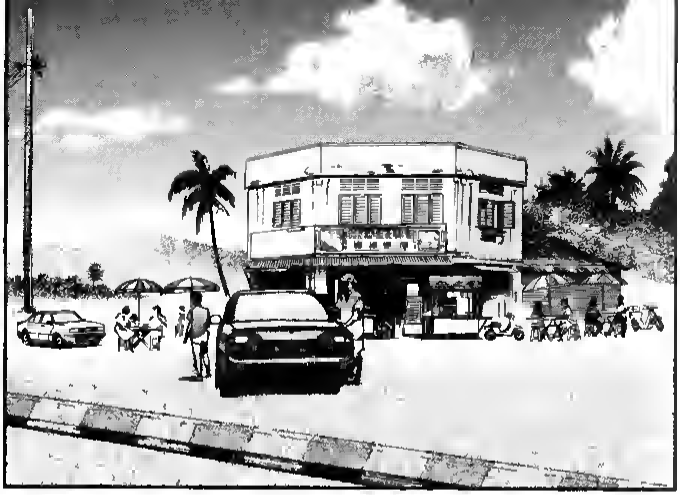
BREEP
BREEP
BREEP

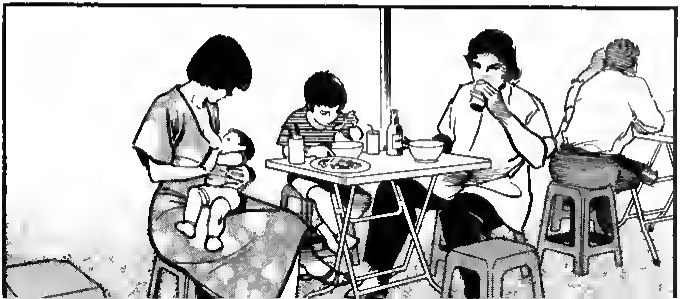
SHUNICHIRO...
YOU CAN'T KILL ME!
JUST MAKE SURE YOU DON'T SINK BEFORE SHION AND I FACE YOU AGAIN!
VOOP

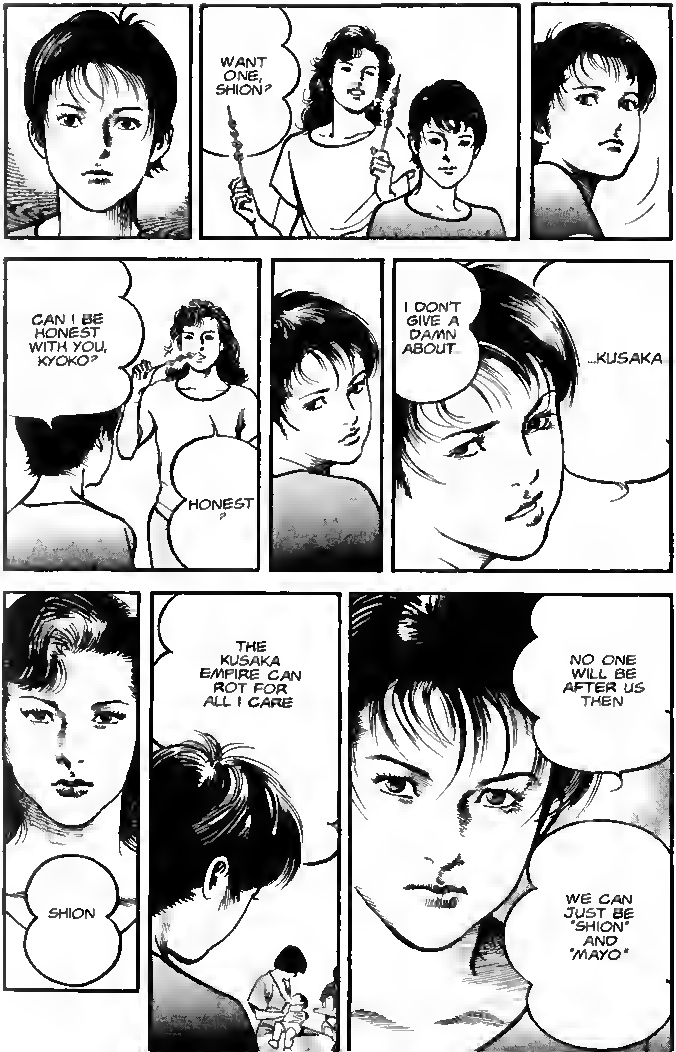
SHINGO..
CHAK
HA HA HA
WHAT AN ANNOY-ANCE..
I'LL STEP ON GOD IF THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES TO WIN!

STRAIN
Jinchiseans
#Manga-Sketchbook@Dalnet


CHAPTER EIGHT
THE TIES THAT BIND






WANT ONE, SHION?
CAN I BE HONEST WITH YOU, KYOKO?
HONEST?
I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT
...KUSAKA
SHION
THE KUSAKA EMPIRE CAN ROT FOR ALL I CARE
NO ONE WILL BE AFTER US THEN
WE CAN JUST BE "SHION" AND "MAYO"

That's the kind of life I want
SHION

NO ONE'S GOING TO STOP AN AMERICAN EMBASSY CAR.
WE CAN GO ANY-WHERE WE LIKE, ANGEL
HOW'D YOU GET AHOLD OF THIS?
THERE'S A CONSUL AT THE EMBASSY WHO'S A REGULAR CLIENT
WE PROVIDED HIM WITH ONE OF OUR YOUNGUNS AND HE FORGOT ABOUT THE CAR.
AMERICA, HUH
THE UNITED
L100

THE UNITED ST
WHAT THE HELL'S THAT?
A TEN DOLLAR BILL TORN IN HALF? WHY HOLD ON TO THAT?
I WONDER

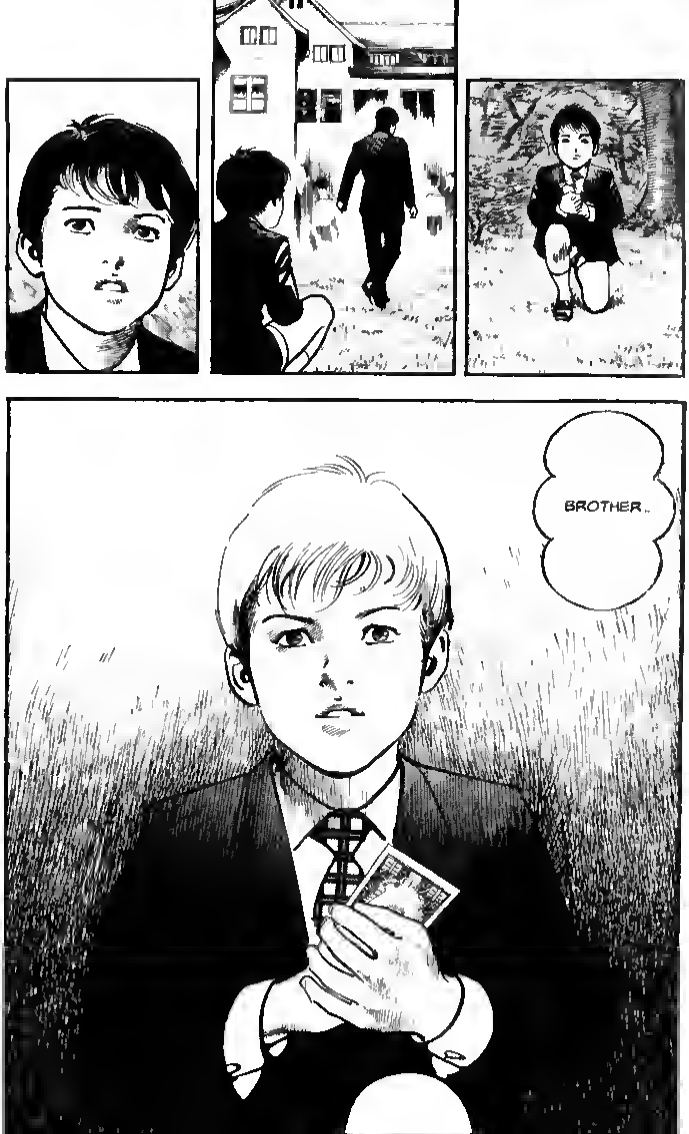
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
10
10

WHAT'S THAT, SHUNICHIRO?

IT'S MONEY FROM A COUNTRY CALLED AMERICA. ONE OF OUR GUESTS GAVE IT TO ME.

SIT HERE
OKAY!
STRONGER THAN JAPAN?
THIS IS THE WORLD'S STRONGEST CURRENCY. IT'LL CONTINUE GETTING STRONGER
JAPAN IS A BABY COMPARED TO AMERICA.
IT'S LIKE HOW IF... YOU AND I FOUGHT OUR DAD WE'D LOSE
HMMM..
YOU WANT IT?

KRRIP!
HALF...
OUR CHARMS
CHARMS?
THAT'S RIGHT
AS LONG AS WE KEEP THESE, WE'RE BROTHERS

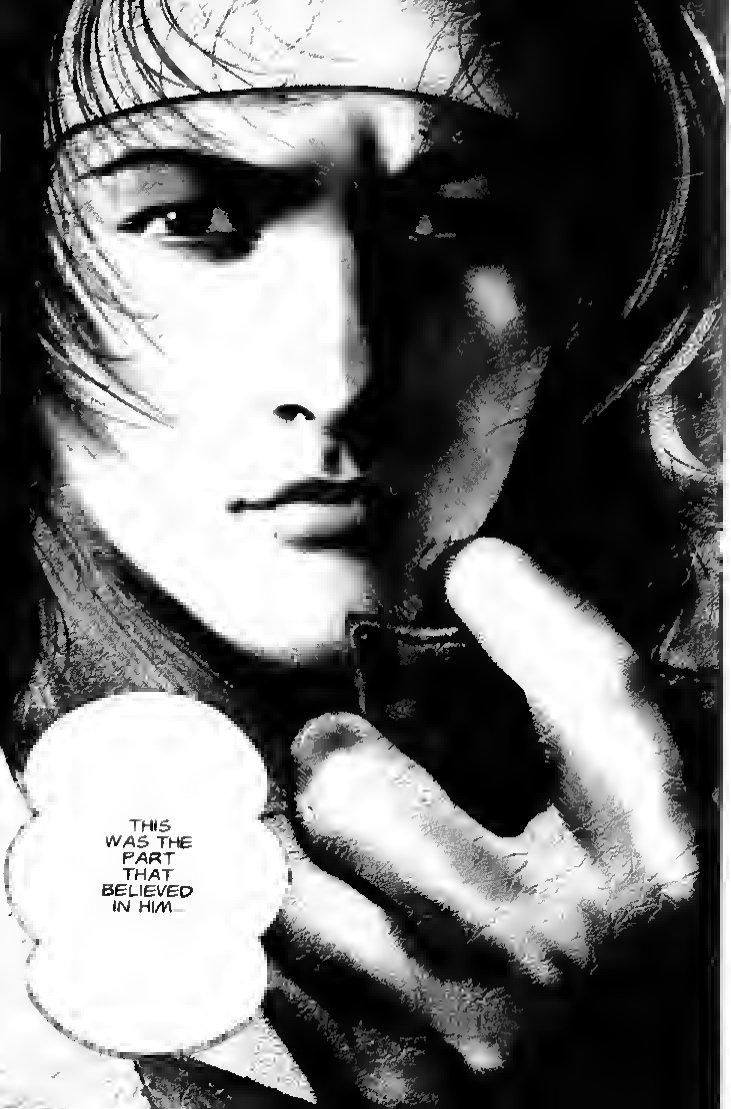

BROTHER..

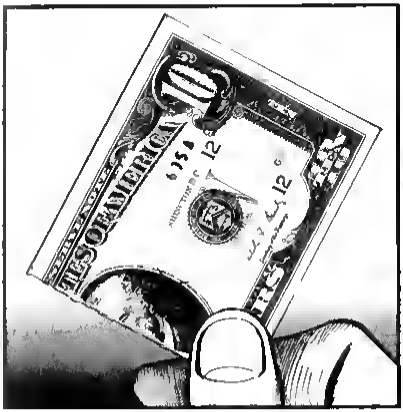
YOU USED TO KILL FOR FIVE BUCKS, RIGHT?

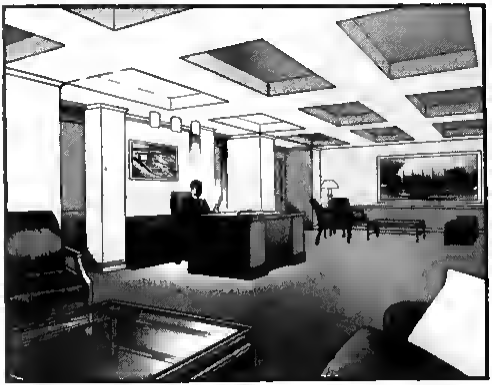
YOU HELD ON TO THAT HALF.

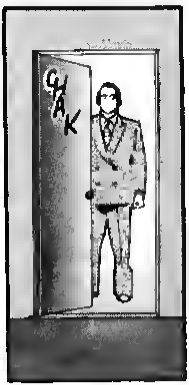
EVEN AFTER YOU KNEW YOUR BROTHER FRAMED YOU?

KRRNGH

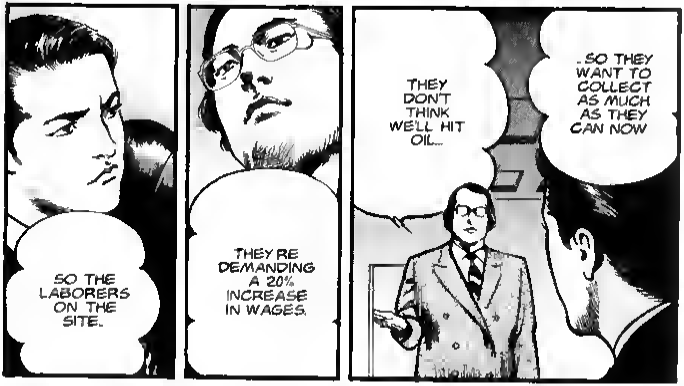

THIS WAS THE PART THAT BELIEVED IN HIM...

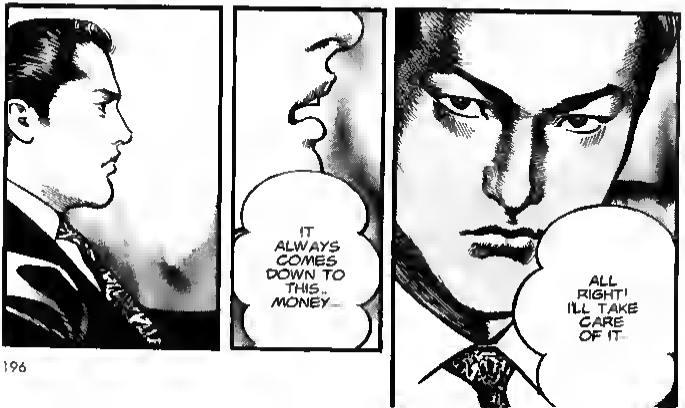

THE SO AMERICA

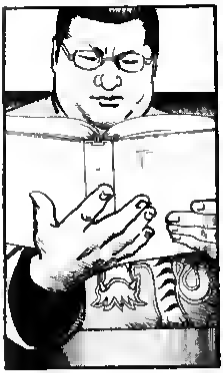



CHAK

SIR, YOU'RE STILL HERE
FSH
WHAT IS IT?


SO THE LABORERS ON THE SITE..
THEY'RE DEMANDING A 20% INCREASE IN WAGES.
THEY DON'T THINK WE'LL HIT OIL...
..SO THEY WANT TO COLLECT AS MUCH AS THEY CAN NOW


IT ALWAYS COMES DOWN TO THIS.. MONEY...
ALL RIGHT! I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.



MAH!

I DON'T GET IT!
WHUD

UNCLE SAI, HOW IS MONEY BEGOTTEN FROM NOTHING?

I DON'T UNDER STAND

THERE'S A DISCREPANCY BETWEEN THE FUNDS RAISED BY KUSAKA AND THE MONEY THEY PUT INTO THIS OIL PROJECT
ACCORDING TO THE BOOKS, THEIR CAPITAL BARELY MANAGES TO COVER THE EXPENSES. BUT I'M CERTAIN THE ACTUAL INVESTMENT FAR EXCEEDS THIS AMOUNT. WHERE IS SHUNICHIRO GETTING HIS FUNDS FROM?

WHY DO YOU NEED TO KNOW THAT?
BECAUSE THAT MIGHT JUST BE HIS ACHILLES' HEEL!

CHAK
YOUR GUESTS HAVE ARRIVED

UNCLE SAI, ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE YOU TO..
..THE FORMER HEAD OF SUMIWA BANK.. AND THE FOUR DIRECTORS WHO WERE CHASED OUT OF KUSAKA BY SHUNICHIRO WHEN THEY TRIED TO TAKE IT OVER BY BACKING SHINGO

I INVITED THEM TO STRIKE AGAINST SHUNICHIRO!

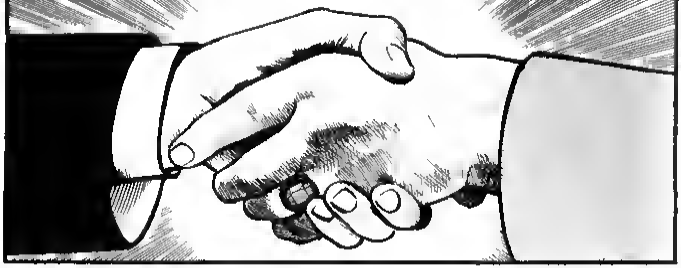
YOU DON'T WANT TO SLEEP WITH ME TONIGHT.
...
I CAN TELL
THIS MAN DEEP DOWN INSIDE A COWARD, PRAYING FOR A GOD

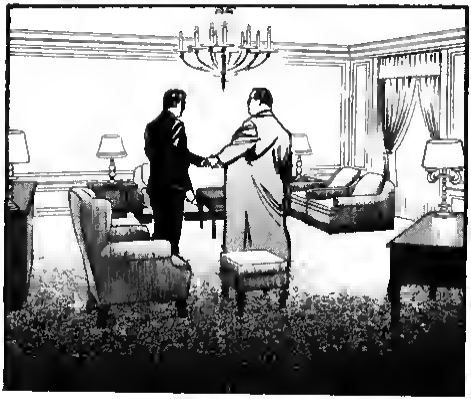
JUMP
KRSH
H-H-HA HA HA HA HA!

GLGG
GLGGG
GLGGG
GLMMP
HUH? WHAT WAS THAT?
FSSSSHHH
AH
BOOM

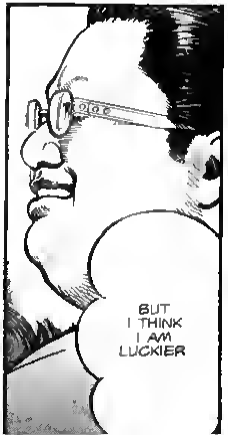
WHAT'S THIS?! WE STRUCK OIL?!
Y-YES, SIR. THE C 3 SITE IN BORNEO JUST BLEW!
A GUSHER FROM THE VERY SPOT RANKED HIGHEST IN OUR RESEARCH!

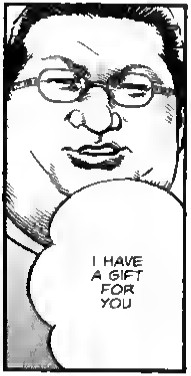
WÓN!
SHA
WÓN!!





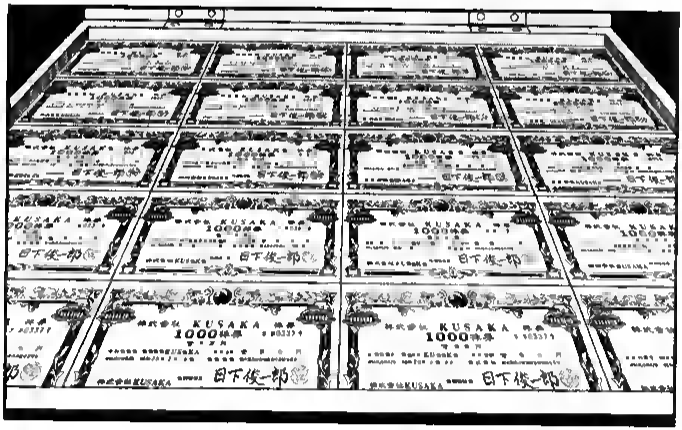
SHUNICHIRO, YOU'RE A LUCKY MAN


BUT I THINK I AM LUCKIER

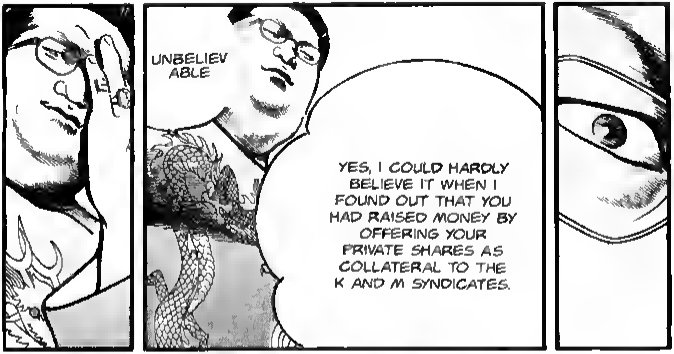

I HAVE A GIFT FOR YOU

WHUD
Y-YOU..

1000
KUSAKA INC. STOCK CERTIFICATE
1000 SHARES
CEO: Shunichiro Kusaka
日下俊一郎



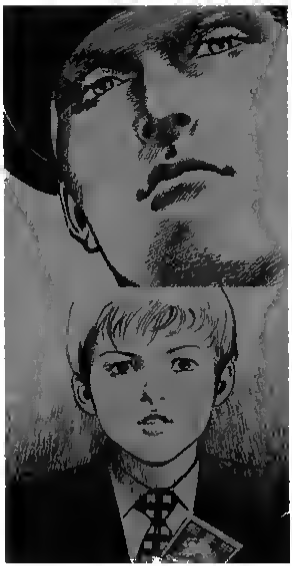
TH-
THAT'S...


UNBELIEV ABLE
YES, I COULD HARDLY BELIEVE IT WHEN I FOUND OUT THAT YOU HAD RAISED MONEY BY OFFERING YOUR PRIVATE SHARES AS COLLATERAL TO THE K AND M SYNDICATES.

I PURCHASED THE LOAN CONTRACT AND THE COLLATERAL FROM THEM
IN OTHER WORDS, THAT MONEY THAT WAS BORROWED WITH THESE STOCKS AND THE COLLATERAL IS MINE

WHAT THE—
YOUR FATE IS NOW IN MY HANDS.

To Be Continued



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BURONSON

DATE OF BIRTH 1947
BIRTHPLACE Nagoya, Japan

Buronson began his career as a comic writer after his discharge from the Japanese Air Self Defense Force. His debut work, ***Pink Punch Masa***, was drawn by **Goro Sakai**. His first hit series was the bloody post-apocalyptic action-adventure ***Fist of the North Star*** (with **Tetsuo Hara**), followed by the detective story ***Doberman Detective*** (with **Shinji Hiramatsu**).

Writing under the name **Sho Fumimura**, Buronson's first collaboration with ***Strain*** artist **Ryoichi Ikegami** was the long-running political/crime thriller ***Sanctuary***. This sophisticated tale of political intrigue and the intense bond between two young men has proved to be a big hit in translation in Latin America as well as the United States.

Q & A

Q. What made you decide to become a professional comic book writer?

Buronson When I was unemployed and broke. I started living with a friend who was a comic creator...

Q. If you hadn't become a comic writer, what profession would you have chosen?

Buronson Gambler.

Q. What are your current interests & hobbies?

Buronson Horse racing, making money, and hair-growth formulas.

Q. How would you describe the American comics industry?

Buronson It's totally different from the Japanese comics industry. Japanese comics are unique and very different from American comics. I hope Japanese manga will be popular and take root in American soil.

Q. What message do you have for your American readers?

Buronson Because there are subtle differences between Japanese and English, parts of my comics may be difficult to understand. I would like American readers to enjoy Japanese comics as "graphic stories," rather than thinking of them as the comics they are familiar with. Japanese comic creators strive to make their work as entertaining as movies.

Sanctuary © 1999 Sho Fumimura/Ryoichi Ikegami/Shogakukan, Inc.

Fist of the North Star © 1999 Buronson/Tetsuo Hara/Shueisha Inc.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

RYOICHI IKEGAMI

DATE OF BIRTH 1944
BIRTHPLACE Fukui Japan
BLOOD TYPE B
PROFESSIONAL DEBUT 1961

One would expect the world-famous artist of such realistic, gritty, and explicit titles as ***Crying Freeman*** and ***Sanctuary*** to be a tormented streetwise ladies man but when Ikegami appeared as **Viz Comics**' honored guest at the **1995 San Diego Comic Con**, he turned out to be a gentle, unassuming man whose greatest preoccupation was picking out just the right gift to bring home to his wife.

In a panel with **Frank Miller** and other American comic luminaries, **Ikegami** confessed that his "dark side" only comes out when he tries to write manga. He claims this is why he is in far greater demand as an artist than a writer. When asked about his sexually explicit artwork, Ikegami laughed and called it a "fan service." The Comic Con honored his lifetime achievements with a coveted **Ink Pot Award**.

Ikegami's artistic career began inauspiciously when he was hired as a sign painter in Osaka after graduating from junior high school. But in 1961, he published his first manga short story in the graphic novel ***Makyo*** ("Magic Mirror"). In 1966, his story ***Sense of Guilt*** appeared in the famed underground manga magazine ***Garo*** where it attracted the attention of Tokyo artist **Shigeru Mizuki** (***Ge Ge Ge no Kitaro***, as well as other horror and children's monster comics), who offered him a job as an assistant artist.

In 1969, Ikegami drew the Japanese version of ***Spiderman***, recently translated into English by **Marvel Comics**. From 1974 to 1979, with writer **Tetsu Kanya**, Ikegami worked on his first major series, ***Otoko Gumi*** ("Gallant Gang"), which was produced as a live-action movie in 1976.

Ikegami's most popular titles include ***Crying Freeman*** (with **Kazuo Koike**) ***Mai the Psychic Girl*** (**Kazuya Kuda**) ***Samurai Crusader*** (**Hirei Oji**) and ***Sanctuary*** (**Sho Fumimure**)—all of which have been translated into English and several other languages—as well as ***Auseo Boy*** (**Kazua Koike**), ***Otoko Ozora*** (**Tetsu Kanya**) and ***Offered*** (**Kazuo Koike**).

Q&A

Q. How did you become a professional comic book artist?
Ikegami: I've loved drawing since elementary school. It was then that I started to dream of being a manga artist.
Q. If you hadn't become a comic artist, what profession would you have chosen?
Ikegami: Cover illustrator
Q. What are some of your recent comic influences?
Ikegami: Neal Adams' ***Superman*** and ***Batman, Lone Wolf and Cub Golgo 13*** (***The Professional***)
Q. What are three of your current interests and hobbies?
Ikegami: Eroticism, violence, and death
Q. What are your plans for your next manga?
Ikegami: I'd like to draw something that illustrates the pain of existence
Q. What are your favorite American comics?
Ikegami: Work by **Neal Adams**, **Richard Corben**, and **Frank Miller**.
Q. Any comments on American, European, and other Asian comic industries?
Ikegami: Japanese comics are highly influenced by the directing, plot, story and choreography of film and literature. But there are many comics that have transcended their roots in novels and movies. Comics are no longer in the realm of children's dreams; they've become an art form that can be enjoyed by adults as well. I'd like to see American comics progress in that same direction.
Q: What message do you have for your American readers?
Ikegami: I'd like American readers to use comics to develop an interest in Japan and the Japanese people.